

Aug. 29

★

STREET &
SMITH'S

★ LOVE
STORY MAGAZINE

15¢

STREET & SMITH'S LOVE STORY★

EVERY WEEK **MAGAZINE** AUGUST 29, 1931

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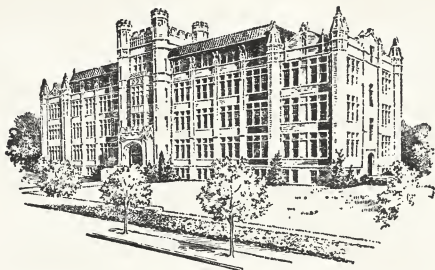
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Vol. LXXXIII

EVERY WEEK

Number 5

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"Pearls For Tears"—a new serial by Vivian Grey, beginning in next week's issue.

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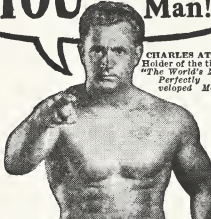
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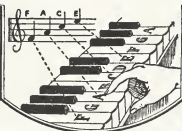
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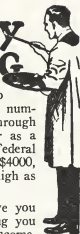
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By VIVIAN GREY

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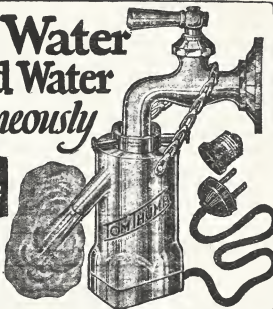
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FREE To Men Past 40

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Medical men know this condition as hypertrophy of the prostate gland. Science now reveals that this swollen gland—painless in itself—not only often cheats men of health, but also bears on the bladder and is often directly responsible for sciatica, back ache, pains in the legs and feet, frequent nightly rising, and dizziness, denoting high blood pressure. When allowed to run on it is frequently the cause of the dreaded disease cystitis, a very severe bladder inflammation.

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By ELLEN HOGUE

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The story of how Jenison rode the wicked stallion Killer Boy, while the girl he loved looked on with agony in her beautiful eyes, is the smashing climax of a novel of circus life which keeps you as much on edge as that great riding kept its spectators breathless.

Under the Big Top of the circus, a fantastic world—"world of the ballyhoo, the shill-lab; of hot dogs and popcorn and water-thin lemonade; of horseshoes and grease paint, of glitter and pomp; elephants that served a king in India; a mangy lion born in the Bronx zoo; stray dogs, stray boys, wives, sweethearts, bad men, good men, weak men, brave men, beggar men, thieves."

Such is the world which Milly, the daughter of the circus and the heroine of this colorful novel, adorned and reigned over. Ellen Hogue knows it so intimately and loves it so well that she makes it come to vibrant life before your eyes. Read "Hearts of the Big Top" if you want thrills in your fiction, thrills mingled with a most touching love story.

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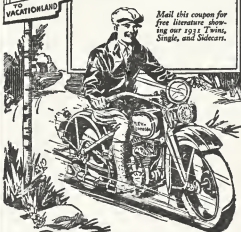
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By Denise Holmes



ANNE WESTON sighed as she regarded the mass of stockings spread on the counter before her. There were stockings of all styles and all prices, of sheerest silk and cobwebby lisle, and of every shade, from palest beige to deep gun metal.

She had just served a customer who had had no idea of what she wanted, and the counter was littered with stockings.

It took Anne some time to fold the stockings smoothly, and her fingers seemed clumsy as they handled

the fragile silk. She wondered rather ruefully whether she would ever come to be as deft and quick in her work as vivacious, red-haired Myra Gibbs, whose rapid fingers could open a box and show a pair of stockings in the twinkling of an eye.

Anne hoped so, and as she neatly stacked up the numerous boxes on the shelves behind her, she also hoped that some day her arms and

shoulders would cease to ache, and that her feet would no longer feel at the end of a day as though she had been walking on hot bricks.

Although she had been working at Appletons' for a week now, her feet still felt as weary as they had after the first day.

As the last box was put in its place, a man sauntered past. Anne thought at first that he wanted to purchase something, but he came to a sudden halt, smiling at her in a way that sent the hot blood rushing to her face.

She saw how his glance took stock of her as he leaned for a moment on the counter, dwelling on the soft, shining gold of her hair and the curves of her throat.

Still smiling, he drew nearer, and with burning cheeks, Anne turned her back on him and pretended to be very busy.

The man looked annoyed, and with a shrug of his shoulders, continued on his way.

Myra Gibbs turned to Anne in amazement.

"Why on earth did you behave like that?" she asked. "You'll never get on if you freeze men up that way!"

Anne stared at her, her cheeks crimson.

"Well, what did you expect me to do?" she returned indignantly. "Encourage him?"

"Why not?" said Myra. "He didn't look so bad. Don't you want to have a good time and a little fun while you're young? If you do, you'll have to change those old-fashioned ideas of yours!"

Anne gave an awkward laugh, for somehow Myra's words made her feel as though she had been rather silly. After all, she must remember that things were very different in New York from the little town

where her grandmother had brought her up.

The old lady's teaching had been strict, too, belonging to a past generation, and because Anne had chafed against it, she had been so eager for Myra's friendship when, two years before, the elder girl had come to spend a holiday with an aunt in Harwood.

Anne had never tired of hearing the other talk of the great city where she worked, and where there was fun and life and adventure, and she had made up her mind to come to New York some day.

Anne had no parents, and when her grandmother had died, she had written to her friend to ask if she could find her a job in town.

It had seemed a wonderful piece of luck when Myra replied that her friend, who worked at the same counter as herself at Appletons', and with whom she lived, had left to be married and that she could get Anne her place.

Anne felt she owed a great deal to Myra, and was unwilling to be thought too innocent.

"Perhaps I—I was too ready to take offense," she admitted at last. "I suppose he didn't mean any harm, but you see, grandmother was so very strict about that sort of thing."

"Oh, that's all changed nowadays, thank goodness!" Myra laughed. "A girl can have a marvelous time to-day without any one thinking the worse of her—especially a pretty girl like you."

Suddenly she caught Anne's arm.

"Why, it's just occurred to me," she added. "How would you like to go to a party to-night?"

"A party?" Anne's blue eyes lit up. "That sounds lovely. What sort of a party?"

"Nothing very much," Myra told her. "Just a small one Hugh Paget

is giving. There will only be four of us. Do come, Anne—Hugh's parties are always wonderful. We shall have a gorgeous time. I believe he's going to take us to that new night club, *The Purple Dragon*."

Anne had often heard Myra mention this rich friend of hers, who was the envy of every other girl at Appletons'.

"Well, I don't know," she hesitated. "Your friend hasn't asked me, has he?"

"You needn't worry about that," Myra assured her. "You'll be doing me a good turn by coming. Hugh is entertaining a business friend of his, and he told me to bring along another girl to make up a party of four to-night. Phyllis Neal was coming, but she is sick with the flu, and I was wondering whom I could get in her place."

Anne still hesitated, and the other laughed.

"Don't be silly, Anne! What's worrying you? Don't you want to see a little of the other side of life? To go to theaters and night clubs and have a bit of fun?"

Anne's eyes began to shine as the other girl conjured up pictures of the things she had secretly longed for all her life.

It would be fun, and what harm was there in it, after all? Besides, hadn't she come to New York with the secret longing that she might perhaps taste a little of the gayety which she had been denied so long?

She nodded.

"All right," she said excitedly. "I'll come!"

Anne gazed about her with rapturous wonder as she stood at Myra's side in the entrance of *The Purple Dragon*.

Palm trees in great urns of beaten brass stood in various corners, vel-

vet curtains of so deep and rich a purple that they looked black save where the light touched them into exquisite color shrouded several doorways, wide divans were ranged against the paneled walls, and piled high with cushions of purple and gold; beneath her feet was a carpet so thick and soft that to tread on it was like walking over a bed of moss.

Anne wondered how it would feel to be like one of the exquisitely dressed girls she saw about her, girls who went to places like this every night of their lives and took it as a matter of course.

There were men here such as she had often longed to meet—tall, perfectly groomed men with charming manners and quiet, cultured voices, and she wondered if Hugh Paget were like that.

Catching a glimpse of her reflection in one of the many mirrors, she could scarcely believe that the radiant girl she saw was herself.

Myra had loaned her a dress that fitted her slim figure perfectly. It was cut away at the back, leaving her shoulders bare, save for the narrow straps of brilliants, and its full skirt fell in softly gleaming folds to the floor.

Never had she worn such a marvelous dress, and she knew that never in her life had she looked as lovely as she did to-night.

What would the men they were meeting think of her?—she wondered.

It was then Myra made a movement forward.

"At last!" she murmured, and Anne saw two men approaching them.

One was slightly built, fair, and very good-looking, and the other was a tall man, with dark hair and a lean, hard face.

Anne guessed that the tall man was Hugh Paget the moment he spoke.

"I'm afraid we've kept you waiting," she heard him say. "We had a little business to settle first—however, now Fordham and I can enjoy ourselves. Have you brought your friend?"

"Phyllis has the flu and couldn't come," Myra explained. "This is Miss Weston, who is pinch-hitting for her."

Introductions were exchanged, and Hugh Paget held out his hand toward Anne.

"Delighted to meet you, Miss Weston," he murmured.

For an instant his eyes met Anne's and lingered there, and, although they seemed dark, they were alight with a strange fire which she felt was burning through to her brain. It made her hold her breath, half afraid of something which she could not understand.

As his fingers touched her own, a queer tingling seemed to shoot through her such as never before had she experienced. Then the look in his eyes was veiled and her hand was released.

He had turned aside, yet she found herself trembling, and when he introduced the other man as Cyril Fordham, she shook hands quite mechanically, her fingers still burning from Hugh Paget's grip.

Myra slipped a hand possessively into the crook of her host's arm, and Anne found herself following them, her eyes on the broad, straight back of the man in front of her.

How proudly he held himself!—she thought. There was something almost arrogant in his carriage, and when once he turned his head to make a laughing answer to some remark of Myra's, she caught an odd, mocking drawl in his voice.

"Are you fond of dancing, Miss Weston?"

She turned quickly as Cyril Fordham spoke to her, coloring angrily as she realized how intently she had been studying Hugh Paget.

"Yes, I love it," she returned hastily, afraid he would think her rude. "But I used to live in the country, where I seldom had the chance of dancing."

He smiled.

"Ah, well, you'll have plenty of dancing before you. You must make up for lost time."

They had reached the dining room with its famous mirrored floor, which was crowded with dancers.

It was oval in shape, and surrounded by a raised platform set with tables whose white napery and silver shone dazzlingly under the brilliant lights.

Behind the tables were purple curtains, and everywhere there were flowers.

All through the evening Anne was conscious of Hugh Paget's strangely compelling gaze, whether she was threading in and out of the dancers in Cyril Fordham's arms or whether she was sitting at the supper table which had been reserved for their party.

Myra seemed to keep Hugh Paget very much to herself most of the evening, but presently Anne found herself dancing with him.

She experienced again that same sensation of fear as she felt his powerful arms about her, and she told herself that she did not like this hard-faced man with the drawling voice, although with a sense almost of shame she knew that his nearness thrilled her.

"Enjoying yourself?" he drawled, his gaze fixed on the flushed face so near his heart.

She looked up at him and saw that

his eyes had that strange light in them again which had disturbed her before.

He went on speaking.

"You know, I'm rather surprised that Myra brought along with her any one as pretty as you. Whenever before I've asked her to find another girl, she's produced some one who certainly wouldn't have taken a beauty prize. You would, you know. Only don't tell Myra I said so—will you?"

Anne flushed.

"I shouldn't think of repeating a silly thing like that!" she retorted. "And it wouldn't interest Myra if I did."

He laughed.

"Oh, wouldn't it! That's where you're mistaken. Myra rather considers me as her property. I think that must be why she always hunts up all the plain girls. She's made a mistake this time!"

Anne flushed. How conceited he was!

She certainly did not like him, she decided. But when his hold tightened round her, she made only a slight effort to break it before she yielded to the pressure, and she was ashamed to feel a pang of disappointment as the music came to an end and he set her free.

As they reached their table, where Myra and Cyril Fordham were sipping champagne, Hugh Paget bowed, and once again his eyes met Anne's with flames in their depths.

"Thank you," he said. "You are a wonderful dancer."

Myra heard the words, and as Anne glanced up, she was amazed at the look she saw on the elder girl's face. Her eyes were blazing, and her lips were set in a thin, straight line!

Too well Anne realized that Hugh Paget had spoken the truth when

he said that Myra regarded him as her property.

It was very evident, and also that she was furiously angry with Anne for having won a word of praise from him.

She looked again at Hugh Paget. Then suddenly every thought was banished from her head by the tremendous clamor that arose all at once.

Alarmed, Anne looked around quickly and was amazed to see that the place, which only a moment ago had been filled with happy, laughing people, was now in a state of uproar.

Men were shouting, girls were running frantically to-and-fro, hurrying waiters were sweeping into their arms all the bottles of wine that stood on the tables.

There were feverish cries of "Police!" Some one shouted: "We're being raided!"

Then Anne heard Hugh Paget's even voice.

"We've got to get out of this quickly!" he said. "Myra——"

At that moment the lights went out. Then Anne felt a strong hand on her wrist and Hugh Paget spoke again.

"Don't be afraid—just follow where I lead," he said rapidly. "I know a way out. Myra and Fordham must take their chance. We can never reach them through this jam. Come along! We can't waste time here."

Half dazed with the suddenness of it all, Anne followed him silently, guided by his strong, lean fingers, whose touch set her thrilling oddly, and jostled every second by the frantic crowd.

A police whistle shrilled sharply through the tumult, and some of the lights came on again.

Anne glanced hurriedly around for



For an instant his eyes met Anne's and lingered there, and although they seemed dark, they were alight with a strange fire which she felt was burning through to her brain.

Myra, but could see no sign either of her or Cyril Fordham.

Then, without quite knowing how they got there, she found she was stumbling behind Hugh Paget through a narrow passage which was quite dark. She could still hear the noise from the club, but it seemed far off, as though a door had shut it away.

At last they passed through an-

other door, up some steps, and were out in the fresh air.

They were in one of the side streets behind the club, and Hugh Paget laughed ruefully.

"That was a close call. I'm sorry to have let you in for that. I don't know what Myra will say about it, but if I could have got to her, I would. Cyril Fordham knows his way about, that's one comfort."

As he broke off, a strange silence fell upon them. They seemed far from the world—this man and herself, Anne thought. Oddly enough, she did not know whether she felt afraid of him or safe with him.

Then he spoke again.

"I must see you again," he murmured. "Before I find a taxi and send you home, tell me when you can meet me?"

She stared at him, sure now that she was afraid of him, startled by the strange note in his voice.

"I—I can't do that!" she stammered, remembering the way Myra had looked just a short time ago. "You're Myra's friend!"

"Nonsense! Look here; how about dinner somewhere to-morrow? Just you and I? Wouldn't you like it?"

She would like it—she knew she would. Yet she hesitated. Somehow she mistrusted this man, and again she thought of Myra.

"I—I don't know," she stammered. "Please let me go home now!"

"All right," he agreed readily. "But don't think this is the last you have seen of me!"

He hailed a passing taxi, and in a moment Anne was sitting back in it. As it drove off, she had a last glimpse of Hugh Paget's lean face as the light of a street lamp fell on it.

There was a queer smile on it, and an expression in his eyes which set her heart beating fast. Somehow, although she was vaguely afraid of him, the spell of his attraction was upon her and she knew that as he had said, she had not seen the last of him.

Myra was still up when Anne reached home.

"Well, you're a fine one!" she sneered. "I give you a chance to enjoy yourself and that's all the

thanks I get! You vamp my boy friend, and then, when there's a bit of trouble, you and he clear out and leave me to get out of the mess as best I can!"

"Myra, you've no right to say such things!" Anne protested hotly. "It wasn't Hugh Paget's fault that we couldn't reach you when the lights went out!"

"Oh, wasn't it?" The other's tone held venom. "He could have got to us if he'd wanted to. And it's no thanks to either of you that Cyril Fordham and I haven't had to spend the night in the police station!"

She shook back her fiery hair and started to get undressed as she continued speaking.

"You—the little country miss with your baby face and innocent blue eyes!" she went on. "And to think I was foolish enough to lend you one of my dresses so that you shouldn't look too much like a Sunday-school teacher!"

"Myra, how dare you talk to me like that!" Anne cried. "And you needn't think I want to take Hugh Paget away from you! I—I think he's perfectly horrid!"

She was upset and disgusted at the sight of the elder girl's jealousy, and as she spoke, she persuaded herself that she meant it, that she never wanted to see Hugh Paget again.

Her passionate outburst calmed Myra. She had often cause to regret her hasty temper, and glancing toward Anne, her eyes narrowed.

She knew very well that Hugh Paget's fancy had been caught by the other girl, but no good would come of wearing her heart on her sleeve.

To display the burning jealousy which smoldered in her heart was a sure way of losing Hugh Paget altogether.

"I'm sorry, Anne," she said peni-

tently. "Don't take any notice of what I say—I can't help my temper. It wasn't your fault that you happened to be with Hugh Paget just then."

But long after Myra had gone into bed, Anne lay awake—the memory of a man's arms—the look in his eyes disturbing her.

Would she ever see Hugh Paget again? She hoped not, and yet she wanted to.

In a little while it would be closing time. There was a deeper color than usual in Anne's cheeks as she prepared to leave the store the next night.

Suppose Hugh Paget should call for her? But she gave up the idea immediately, considering that she and Myra always left together.

At that moment Myra, who had finished serving a customer, paused at her side.

"I'm sorry, Anne," she said airily. "You'll have to go home alone to-night."

"You never told me you were going to be out this evening!" Anne protested.

"Well, I'm telling you now," said Myra with acid sweetness. "As a matter of fact, some kind fairy god-mother has sent three of us tickets for 'The Love Song' at the Superba. Sorry, my dear."

This meant that Anne would be alone all the evening, and at the thought once again she seemed to visualize Hugh Paget's smiling face.

Would she see him, after all?

She parted with Myra outside the door and looked about her, half expecting to see the big blue car which had been sent to get them the previous night. But there was no sign of it.

Evidently Hugh Paget had never meant any of the things he said.

Probably he had forgotten all about her. Rich men were like that, Anne reflected rather miserably.

She took the bus on the opposite side of the street, and she was just about to step off the pavement to cross the road when a taxi pulled up in front of her.

As it stopped, a man in a topcoat and a felt hat got out and walked toward her—Hugh Paget!

"Good evening, Miss Weston," he drawled. "You haven't forgotten your engagement with me, I hope?"

She caught her breath.

"You!" she stammered faintly.

He nodded.

"Yes, of course! Come along, get in."

He took her arm, and although she tried to hold back, the strong pressure of his fingers thrilled and sapped her resistance.

"But I never said that I'd come," Anne faltered, although gladness was echoing in her voice.

"Well, you are coming, aren't you?" His dark eyes mocked her. "Or are you afraid of me?"

As he had expected, her chin went up.

"Certainly not!" she returned indignantly.

He laughed, and a moment later she found herself sitting in a corner of the taxi with Hugh Paget beside her.

"I'm glad you've agreed to dine with me," he said as the cab started.

She glanced down in dismay at her clothes.

"I must go home first," she said. "I can't go anywhere in these clothes."

"Don't worry about that," he rejoined calmly. "You would look exquisite in anything. And I'm taking you to my apartment—I thought perhaps you would prefer it to a restaurant."

His apartment!

Anne began to feel rather frightened, yet when he smiled at her in that gently teasing way, her doubts faded. They had died away completely when presently she allowed him to lead her into a big house off Park Avenue where the taxi had stopped.

An elevator took them to an upper floor, and there Hugh Paget produced a latchkey, and, opening a door, led Anne into a room where a bright fire leaped on the hearth, which was banked by large, deep armchairs.

Electric lights, mellowed by orange shades, shed a soft, warm radiance over everything, and a bowl of flowers standing on a small table in one corner filled the air with fragrance.

"Oh, what a lovely place!" she cried.

"You like it?" he murmured. "I'm glad. Now I expect you'd like to clean up before we have dinner. Come in here."

She followed him across the small hall, and as he opened a door, he switched on the light, revealing a beautiful bedroom decorated in pastel tones of blue and rose.

"This is the room my sister uses when she stays with me," he explained. "I think you will find everything you need."

With a smile he closed the door behind him, and Anne gazed around her with wide eyes, almost afraid at the sight of so much beauty.

She crossed the rich blue carpet to the dressing table, where gold-and-tortoiseshell brushes were laid out on the polished surface. There were perfumes in crystal bottles, and powder, and everything that the heart of a girl could want.

She glanced toward the bed, and a large cardboard box with a smaller

box beside it caught her eye as they lay on the coverlet.

Feeling as though she were trespassing, she crept up to see what they were, to read the words "For Anne" written on a card slipped beneath the string.

With excited fingers she untied the knots, and when she removed the lid there was another slip of paper which said:

To match the prettiest eyes in New York.

Beneath the layers of tissue paper she found a gown of the most exquisite blue, a fairy creation of tulle, perfect, yet simple.

In the same box was a set of lingerie of sheerest silk, a pair of little gold slippers, and stockings such as she herself so often sold for five dollars a pair.

In the smaller box were three gold-colored roses.

She gave a little gasp of delight, then a frown puckered her forehead.

Hugh Paget meant her to wear these lovely things, yet something told her that she should not accept them.

Her heart quickened as she held the gown in her hand, and then, glanced down at her plain black dress. The difference between them!

She held the dress against herself and looked at the effect in the mirror.

For a second she hesitated, then the spirit of recklessness seized her.

Why not wear it? Hugh Paget had meant her to do so—and it would be stupid to offend him.

Eagerly she pulled off her close-fitting hat, and tossing it with her coat onto the bed, began to dress.

Ten minutes later a knock came at the door.

"Come in!" she called shyly.

"Are you ready?" said Hugh Paget's voice.

The door was opened, and the man who entered caught his breath at the beauty that met his eyes—a vision of white and gold and blue.

Above her piquant face her hair was a golden crown, her gold-shod feet gleamed from beneath the billowing mist about her ankles, and golden flowers nestled against the creamy smoothness of her shoulder.

His dark eyes flamed with silent admiration as they flickered over her.

"You look like a moonbeam," he said at last, "a moonbeam that stayed too long on earth and was trapped and turned into a girl."

Trapped!

To Anne the word had a sinister sound, and she unconsciously put a hand to her throat.

What was she doing here? What right had she to these lovely clothes she was wearing?

What did she know of this dark-eyed man with the hard mouth who repelled yet attracted her?

He had shown her nothing but kindness until now, but in reality he was a stranger, and all through she had been conscious of a vague fear of him.

And she was alone in his apartment!

Hugh Paget took her hands in his, and once again his touch thrilled her.

"I hope you are mortal enough to enjoy a good meal!" he added, and his laugh broke the spell of her fear.

He had a nice laugh, Anne thought; deep and gentle. It softened the stern lines of his mouth so that he looked years younger, and presently she found that she was laughing, too, all doubts forgotten.

He led her into the room she had first entered, where a round table, spread with a white cloth and shin-

ing glass and silver, had been wheeled in and drawn near to the fire.

Never in her life had Anne tasted such a wonderful meal. It was served to them by a deft manservant, and dish succeeded dish, each one more delicious than the last.

Her fear died away completely as she sat listening to Hugh Paget's light, entertaining conversation. He was a man who had traveled widely, she discovered, and while he charmed her with tales of every city in Europe, she was lost to the passing of time.

The wine and good food and the warmth of the fire combined to make her feel strangely happy and at ease. It seemed ludicrous that she should ever have been frightened of him.

Suddenly she realized that the butler had left them alone, and as though waking from a rose-colored dream to sharp reality, she was acutely aware of Hugh Paget's dark face close to hers, his eyes burning.

"Lovely Anne!" he murmured. "Beautiful Anne!"

He was leaning over the back of her chair. His lips were close to her hair, his hands caressing her arms, gradually tightening on them.

Her heart began to thud against her side. Too late she realized her folly.

So this was to what it had all been leading! She might have known that men like Hugh Paget did not give a girl an evening like this and expect nothing in return.

She got to her feet, sick with fear, but he laughed gently, catching her hands and drawing her into his powerful arms—arms whose touch seemed to thrill her strangely despite her terror.

"You wonderful, exquisite thing," he said softly. "Anne, I would do anything for you, little witch."

She caught her breath, striving frantically to break his hold. But his lips were seeking hers, his arms imprisoning her so that she could scarcely move. His lips had found hers, and were bruising them in kisses that seemed to burn her very soul.

"Let me go!" she sobbed.

She drew a gasping breath, struggling with all her slender strength to beat him off. By a terrific effort she freed herself, and drew away from him, her white face twisted with horror as she saw the little flames that flickered in his eyes.

"Keep away from me!" she cried hysterically. "I hate you! I hate you! Oh, what a fool I was to have come here!"

She saw him take a step toward her, and, dazed with terror, she looked madly around.

A glass half filled with champagne stood on the table, and snatching it up, she threw it at him blindly.

Then, not waiting to see if it struck him or not, she turned and fled on frenzied feet out of the room and out of the apartment.

The glass Anne had thrown in her terror at Hugh Paget had struck him in the face, temporarily blinding him, and for a moment he stood like a statue, the wine trickling unheeded down his cheek, reddened by the blood from a cut which the broken glass had scored across his skin.

By the time he had cleared his eyes, she had gone, and he stared dazedly about him.

Near the chair was a flower which had been torn from her dress in her struggle with him.

He stooped to pick it up; then, as he held the fragile thing in his hand, his fingers clenched savagely on it, crushing the delicate petals.

What a fool he had been! She was a sweet girl, and he had treated

her as he had treated Myra Gibbs and others of her kind, who had allowed him to take their lips in ready payment for a good time!

Fear for her safety came to torture him. What would she do? Where had she fled when she had left the apartment?

In her distracted frame of mind he felt that anything might happen to her alone in the streets at this hour of night.

He clenched his hands in a sudden agony at his own helplessness. How could he repair the damage he had done? How could he find her?

He knew that she lived somewhere with Myra Gibbs, but he had never known Myra's address.

How would she get home?

He poured himself a stiff drink, and then he went outside to question the policeman on the beat, and any one else who he thought might help him. In every instance the answer was the same—no one had seen a girl in a mist-blue gown.

In despair he went back to the apartment.

Then, about three quarters of an hour after Anne had gone, the doorbell rang.

He went himself to answer it in the desperate hope that whoever was there might be bringing news of Anne, but it was Myra Gibbs who stood on the threshold, her greenish eyes glittering coldly.

"Anne——" he began frantically, but the girl cut him off, walking into the hall and shutting the door.

"Anne's all right," she said curtly. "She's at home. She arrived in a taxi just as I got back from a show, some unknown admirer kindly sent me a ticket for, and she told me the story."

"Thank heavens she's safe!" the man breathed. "What I've been through!"

Myra eyed his cut face with a sneering smile.

"It must have been a great party," she observed. "You look as though you've come off a battlefield, and Anne is sobbing her heart out." She dropped a bag she was carrying on the floor. "I've come for her things, and in there you'll find the clothes you gave her."

An ugly twist came to her lips as she went on shrewdly:

"So that was why some of us had tickets for the theater to-night, was it? You thought you'd make sure of getting me out of the way, didn't you?"

The knowledge of Anne's safety had restored Hugh Paget's composure, and he answered her coolly:

"Yes, I sent them. The plan worked, didn't it? I've never yet known you to refuse something for nothing."

Fury leaped into Myra's eyes.

"Listen to me, Hugh Paget!" she cried shrilly. "If you think you're going to throw me aside for a little country——"

"Be quiet!" he said sharply.

"So that's the way of things, is it? You're through with me, and you think I'm going to let Miss Innocence step in and take my place! Well, you're wrong!"

Hugh Paget's mouth shut like a trap.

"That's enough, do you hear?" he ordered. "You needn't think you own me just because I've taken you about and given you a good time. If it hadn't been for your jealousy, I shouldn't have had to resort to a trick like that. I saw the way you looked at that kid the other night—just like a cat that's getting ready to scratch."

He spoke with cold contempt, and a storm of hatred gleamed in Myra's eyes.

She mastered her feelings with an effort, knowing that she was in danger of losing the battle. Her tone changed, and her arms crept around his neck.

"Hugh, how can you be so cruel to me?" she said softly. "We've been such good friends, and it's a bit hard on a girl when——"

"I'm sorry, Myra." He loosened her clasp. "You must understand that I'm through with that sort of thing. We've been good friends, as you say, but you know quite well that we were nothing more. It's all changed now. If Anne will take me, I'm going to marry her."

"Marry her?" she repeated dazedly. "Hugh, are you crazy?"

He shook his head.

"Far from it. She's the sweetest, dearest girl I've ever met, and I'm going to move heaven and earth to make her my wife."

He turned to go into the sitting room, and Myra stared at his broad back with an expression of venomous hatred.

So he thought he could treat her like that, did he? A cruel little smile curved her lips.

"You realize Anne hates the sight of you?" she asked at last as she followed him.

"I'm not surprised," he returned bitterly as he faced her. "It would be almost incredible if she didn't. Nevertheless, I'm going to do my utmost to win her."

Myra thought rapidly. She was fully aware that Hugh Paget was not a man to be readily swayed from his purpose. She had no intention of giving him up easily, but she had sense enough to see that her cause would be lost if she allowed her feelings to get the better of her.

"I'm sorry, Hugh," she said in a changed tone. "I didn't understand. You must despise me for the way

I've behaved, but you can hardly blame me for feeling that I'd been rather badly treated. But if you love Anne——"

She broke off as the man looked at her sharply, suspicious of this sudden change of front. It was unlike Myra to take it so calmly—he had fully expected another fit of temper.

"I do love her," he answered.

There was a bitter smile on her lips as he spoke.

"Oh, well, I must just make the best of it in that case," she went on. "I'm sorry if I've talked like a cat, but it was a surprise, you know. Anne's a lucky girl, and if you can win her, you'll be a lucky man."

She forced a laugh, and, deceived by it, Hugh Paget caught her hands.

"Myra, that's generous of you," he said slowly. "It's sporting of you to take it so well. We'll always be very good friends, I hope, but this evening I knew that Anne was



She drew a gasping breath, struggling with all her slender strength to beat him off. "Keep away from me!" she cried hysterically. "I hate you! I hate you!"

the only girl in the world for me. I didn't mean to hurt you——"

She withdrew her hands from his.

"That's all right—we won't talk about it any more," she interrupted. "Now where are Anne's things? I've got a taxi below, and I don't want to keep it waiting all night."

DEAR MISS WESTON: I am quite sure that after my unpardonable behavior you never want either to see or hear of me again, and yet I cannot rest without telling you how deeply I regret it. I had so hoped that we might be friends, and although I know after what has happened you will find such a thing impossible, I implore you to let me see you once more so that I may beg your forgiveness in person. I shall be waiting to-night in the hope of seeing you.

Believe me,

Yours most sincerely,

HUGH PAGET.

As Anne read the letter in her hand for the second time, her eyes sparkled angrily.

As though she would consider for a moment meeting him again! She shuddered again at the memory of the terror of that evening.

Myra looked up from her breakfast.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

Anne threw the letter down with a harsh laugh, and Myra skimmed the pages casually. The letter contained only what she had expected.

"Why are you so angry?" she asked when she had read it. "After all, he can't do more than apologize."

"Yes, and just because he apologizes he expects me to be prepared to meet him again as though nothing had happened!" Anne cried hotly. "I never want to see him again!"

Myra leaned back in her chair.

"Do you think you're quite fair, Anne?" she went on. "You see, you've been brought up so strictly, and you don't realize that in these

days it is nothing very terrible for a man to kiss a girl. Lots of girls expect it. And that's all Hugh did, isn't it? He never meant any harm. When I went around to get your things he was most awfully upset about it all. He hadn't thought of you taking it like that."

Anne stared at her. Myra's attitude puzzled her. Instead of the fury she had expected when she had returned that night, Myra had said very little about the trick Hugh Paget had played on her; with no word of reproach, she had volunteered to go to his apartment to get Anne's things and to return his gifts, which, Anne had declared, nothing would induce her to keep.

"I don't understand you," she said. "I should have thought you were the last person to want me to be fair to Hugh Paget. I feel terrible to think I allowed myself to go to his apartment when he was really your friend. Instead of being angry about it, you've been perfectly sweet to me ever since."

The other girl gave a little laugh, but she took care that Anne should not see the cruel smile that flickered over her lips.

"My dear, when you're up against fate, there's not much good in worrying about it," she said, putting her hands tenderly on Anne's shoulders.

There was a puzzled frown on Anne's forehead, and Myra went on to explain.

"I'll admit I was rather upset when I discovered you were going to cut me out with Hugh, but, after all, he and I have never been anything more than friends to one another, and now I know that something bigger has come into his life, I've just got to take a back seat. Don't you understand? Hugh cares for you."

Anne felt the blood racing through

her veins. Was it true that Hugh Paget cared—that he was not just the philanderer she thought him?

"Well, anyway, I don't like him," she said, trying to convince herself that she meant it. "And I don't want to have anything more to do with him."

"Do see him, at least," Myra urged, "and give him a chance to defend himself. I'm sure you won't regret it."

She saw with secret pleasure that Anne was wavering. If Hugh Paget had set his heart on Anne, he must win Anne, she decided. After that, if she played her cards carefully, she would be able to have the game in her own hands, to be revenged on the girl she hated.

In spite of her firm determination to ignore the man she was sure she disliked, Anne felt her resolve weakening as the day passed.

Hugh Paget's face had a maddening habit of swimming before her eyes just when she least wished to think about him, and although she fought to put him out of her mind, her heart was thundering nervously when, at five thirty that evening, she found herself out in the brightly lighted street again.

Quelling the impulse to look about her to see if his car was near, she hurried on, her eyes bent on the ground.

Suddenly some one stood in her path, and a hand was laid on her arm.

"Anne!" said a man's voice.

She glanced up swiftly, catching her breath as the dark eyes of Hugh Paget met her own.

"Did you get my note?" he murmured.

As she gazed at his face, so close to hers, a thrill ran through her, and it was an effort to keep her voice steady as she answered, "Yes."

"Can you possibly forgive me?" he asked diffidently. "I know I've no right to expect it, but—oh, Anne, I'd give everything I have to hear you say it!"

"I have forgiven you," she said coldly. "As far as I am concerned, the matter is finished."

"I see," he said bitterly. "You say that just to get rid of me, because you hate the sight of me. Well, it's all I deserve, I suppose."

He gave a broken laugh, and the sound pierced Anne's heart. Impulsively she touched his sleeve.

"I don't," she murmured. "I don't hate the sight of you. I tried to make myself believe that I did, but it's no use."

She faltered into silence, feeling the blood burning in her face. Why had she said that?

"Anne—my dear," he said hoarsely. "Do you mean that?"

He gripped her hands, forcing her to meet his eyes. The fire in them seemed to reach her, so that she was tingling and glowing with some strange new happiness.

"Oh, Anne," he went on, "does this mean that it's not utterly hopeless? I've never ceased to reproach myself for what happened. I've never stopped telling myself what a fool I've been. You see, I have never met a girl like you," he finished, "and when I did——"

He broke off, and a rueful smile touched the corners of his stern mouth.

A strange, intoxicating wave of joy flowed through Anne, bringing something else with it that she did not wholly understand, but which left a queer lump in her throat.

Hugh Paget, humbled and pleading before her, was very different from the Hugh Paget she had tried to hate. His mouth had softened and lost that hint of arrogance, his

eyes were steady, with a yearning hunger in them.

With a thrill of wonder, Anne remembered that Myra had told her that he cared. In that moment she realized that she loved him, and as he stared down into her face, the message of love given and returned flashed between them.

The maid, panting from her long climb up the stairs, knocked on the door of the room where Myra Gibbs was putting on her hat.

"A telegram for Miss Weston," she said as the other girl opened the door.

"She's gone," Myra returned. "She wanted to get her hair waved before going to business. You'd better let me take it and I'll give it to her when I see her. Tell the boy there's no answer."

Left alone, Myra stared at the blue envelope in her hand.

She saw that it was a cablegram, and the only person who could possibly have cabled to Anne was Hugh Paget.

It was now nearly two weeks since Anne and the man she herself loved had become engaged, and for the last week Hugh Paget had been away in Havana on business.

To-day was Saturday, and he was not expected back until Monday or Tuesday. Could this mean that he intended to return sooner?

A gleam shot into Myra's eyes. On a sudden impulse she tore open the envelope and took out the flimsy piece of paper it contained.

ANNE DARLING: Flying home Saturday. Expect to land about five. Shall drive straight to town to see you. HUGH.

For a second Myra stood still; then, as an idea came to her, a cruel wicked smile passed swiftly over her face. A glance at her watch showed

her that she must hurry if she were to carry out the plan she had in mind, and, snatching up her bag, she ran out of the room and down the stairs.

At the end of the block was a drug store where she could phone.

"Give me Mayfield 2-0066," she told the operator.

A maddening time seemed to pass before a man's voice spoke.

"Hello?"

"May I speak to Mr. Cyril Fordham, please? Tell him it is Miss Gibbs."

There followed another period of waiting, then she was rewarded by hearing the voice of the man whose acquaintance she had fostered since the day when Hugh Paget had told her that everything between them was over.

"Hello, Myra," he called. "What's the trouble?"

"Listen, Cyril," she said quickly. "I've got an idea. I know you like Anne Weston, and you know I'm just crazy over Hugh Paget. Now, listen——"

She spoke rapidly for some minutes with scarcely a pause; then, as she finished, an approving laugh came over the wire.

"Myra, you've got brains! I'm with you! Meet me in the lobby of the Shaftesbury as soon as you're free."

There was a touch of spring in the air, and in Central Park the buds were rapidly swelling on trees which in another month would be hidden by a film of misty green.

Among their branches birds were singing their loves songs, and to Anne, sitting, watching the children at play, it seemed that the whole world was joining in her glorious happiness.

With a throb of rapture she gazed

at the great sapphire which blazed on her left hand.

She had been engaged twelve days—each wonderful day a miracle of joy! She had not dreamed that such ecstasy could be hers, and sometimes she felt almost afraid lest such happiness should be too glorious to last.

Looking back, it seemed impossible that she should ever have felt afraid of one whom she had grown to know as the dearest man in all the world.

What was he doing now?—she wondered. The days seemed so lonely without him that she wondered how she had ever lived before he had come into her life.

He filled her world to the exclusion of everything else, and the hours of his absence dragged interminably.

To-day was only Saturday—there were at least forty-eight hours before she could hope to see him again!

She arose, deciding that it was time to go home, for dusk had begun to fall and a chill crept into the air.

She would make herself some tea, she thought, and then kill a little time by going to the movies. Myra had told her during the morning that she was going to spend the week-end with a friend in the country, and had gone off to catch a train as soon as the shop closed at one o'clock, and Anne was alone.

As she turned into the street where she and Myra lived, she noticed a big car drawn up to the curb.

There was something familiar about the figure of the man who stood on the pavement beside it, and as she approached, she recognized Cyril Fordham.

As he caught sight of her, he hurried toward her.

"Miss Weston!" he greeted. "The very person I want to see, and I

was so afraid I should never find you!"

There was an urgency in his voice which brought a frown of alarm to her face.

"What is the matter?" she asked quickly.

"It is about Myra," he returned. "I had a phone message half an hour ago from some one with whom she's going to stay—apparently she had met with an accident—I gathered that she is seriously ill. She wants to see you. Her friend can put you up if you could manage to stay all night. I'll drive you down in the car now."

He spoke jerkily—he was evidently very worried, and Anne guessed that Myra had come to mean a good deal to him.

"Why, of course, I'll come," she replied. "Poor Myra—you don't know what has happened?"

He shook his head.

"They didn't say much, but I'm afraid it's serious. Luckily Myra had my number, or it wouldn't have been possible to get in touch with you otherwise. Can you hurry?"

"Just give me time to collect a few things and I'll be ready," she answered.

A shade of relief passed across his face.

"Good. I'll wait here for you," he said.

Anne ran up the narrow stairs, her brain in a turmoil. As she hastily flung a nightdress and a brush and comb into a bag, she seemed to see Myra lying strangely still, in pain, perhaps even dying.

The thought made her catch her breath. What could have happened to her? If only they knew the details!

She paused to scribble a note to their landlady, saying that she was spending the night with friends and

would return on Sunday. Then she ran hastily downstairs.

Scarcely five minutes had passed before she slipped into the seat next to Cyril Fordham in the big car, and the next instant it slid forward down the street.

Anne sat silent during the drive. The man at her side was too occupied with threading his way through the traffic to speak, and presently, under his guidance, the great car was free of the congested streets and streaking through the suburbs and at last the open country.

As mile upon mile was covered, the last vestige of daylight fled and night dropped down upon them, its blackness broken here and there by the lighted windows of houses.

Anne had no idea how long they had been on the road when Cyril Fordham indicated a package on the seat between them.

"I've just remembered—my man put up some coffee and sandwiches for us before I came away," he said. "The coffee's in the thermos there. Won't you have some? It'll do you good."

He started to unwrap the package, and, pouring some coffee into a little tin cup, handed it to her.

It was hot and strong, and sent a pleasant glow through her.

"That's right," he said as she gave him back the empty cup. He poured some out for himself. "You look better for it, and later on we may feel grateful for this."

He packed away the remains of the meal and once again drove on.

Comforted by the coffee, Anne felt a drowsy sensation of content flow over her, and she snuggled down in her seat.

Presently her eyes closed. The rocking motion of the car was strangely soothing, and gradually

the incessant purring of the engine merged into a deep silence.

Suddenly she became aware of some one shaking her arm.

"Here we are—wake up, Anne," said a man's voice.

She opened her eyes and looked up at Cyril Fordham.

"I must have been asleep," she stammered. "I feel so stupid!"

"It's the cold air. Take my arm. That's right!"

She was being helped out of a car. Through a blurring mist she was conscious of her companion leading her up a path toward a lighted doorway.

She felt heavy and bemused. What was she doing here with this man?

Of course, they were going to Myra—something had happened to Myra—an accident.

"Is Myra here?" she asked drowsily.

"Yes."

They were standing in a brightly lighted room, although Anne had no very clear idea of how they got there. Cyril Fordham was talking to a man in some kind of livery.

"We'll go right up," she heard him say. "The lady is tired."

Vaguely she realized that something was wrong. She tried to speak, but her tongue clung to the roof of her mouth, and she had to hold tightly to the arm about her, because the floor beneath her feet was threatening to give way.

"I—I feel very odd," she stammered.

The man smiled at her, and to her distorted vision it looked like the smile of some evil spirit.

"You'll be all right in a minute," he said.

They were following the man up some stairs, and then Anne realized that she and Cyril Fordham were

alone in a room, the door of which was shut.

He led her toward a chair.

"Sit down," he murmured. "You will feel better presently."

She brushed her hand across her eyes. His smiling face swam before her, mocking, threatening, and as the dark mist gradually cleared from her brain, a new and sudden suspicion gripped her.

"Myra!" she faltered. "Where is she?"

"Not here," he rejoined coolly. "On the contrary, I expect she is at your rooming house, where by now she has probably told Hugh Paget, with great reluctance, that you have taken advantage of his absence to spend a quiet week-end with me."

For a moment Anne stared at him blankly, incapable of thinking. The vile trick that had been played on her was almost more than she could realize.

"What do you mean?" she gasped at last. "What are you talking about? Hugh——"

"Exactly." He nodded. "Hugh is returning before he was expected, and I'm afraid he is going to have his opinion of you severely changed. I'll be perfectly frank with you. We tricked you into coming down here. Myra is not the sort to allow anything to come between herself and the man she loves, and neither am I. I love you, Anne. I've loved you since the night I met you, but you were too infatuated even to notice my existence. Well, now I'm proposing to make you notice it!"

A cry of horror came from her lips.

"You—you unspeakable cad!" she cried weakly. "Do you suppose for a minute that he'll believe your vile lies?"

He laughed softly.

"Certainly I think he will. Hugh

Paget does not think a great deal of your sex on the whole."

She got to her feet.

"Is that what you suppose?" Her blue eyes flashed fire. "Oh, I can't tell you how utterly vile and cheap you are!"

She tried to reach the door, but the man's arms were around her, holding her back.

"Don't be a little idiot!" he told her quietly. "Nobody means you any harm. You hadn't any scruples when you took Hugh Paget away from Myra, had you? Not that I'm trying to make out I'm doing this solely to help Myra. I'm not. I love you. I want you more than anything on earth!"

She was half fainting in his arms, too weak and too shaken even to struggle.

If only Hugh were here to help her!

A mist clouded her senses, but through it she was conscious of a sudden noise, angry voices in the corridor outside, a thundering on the door which seemed to shake the whole room.

"You can't go in there!" some one said.

"Oh, can't I?" was the furious reply.

The door burst open, and with staring eyes, Anne, facing it, strained over Cyril Fordham's shoulder and found herself gazing into the white face of Hugh Paget!

His face was like a mask, in which the blazing eyes were the only living things, eyes that bored into her soul like dark fires of fury.

"So it is true!" he said at last in a terrible voice. "When Myra told me where you were I wouldn't believe her!"

Anne found herself set free from the arms about her. She tried to go to the man she loved, but her legs



"Anne!" said a man's voice. She glanced up swiftly, catching her breath as the dark eyes of Hugh Paget met her own.

refused to carry her—she seemed to be fighting for her very breath.

"Hugh——" she gasped. "I——"

She stumbled toward him, holding out beseeching arms, but as she touched him she was flung roughly aside so that she almost fell.

"Get away from me, you little cheat!"

He glared at her with such fierce, relentless contempt that the words which struggled to her lips died there.

"My heavens, I'd have staked my very soul on your innocence!" he went on hoarsely. "You—with your baby face—the little country girl—— I thought you were the purest thing that breathed!" He drew a labored breath, and the veins on his forehead were corded. "Instead of that you're just like all the others."

Anne's face grew white.

"Hugh! Before you say such terrible things, give me a chance to speak!" she sobbed frantically. "Let me explain!"

"Do you think I want explanations when I see you here in another man's arms?" He laughed furiously.

He swung around to Cyril Fordham.

"As for you, I'm not going to waste words on you. If she's so willing to go with you, you're more than welcome to her!"

He flung one more glance at the girl, who stood in silence against the wall, then the door slammed behind his back.

Cyril Fordham's laugh broke the silence.

"What did I tell you? I knew he'd never listen to you. I shouldn't waste regrets on any one who had so little faith in me as that—there are better men in the world than Hugh Paget, Anne. He'll never marry you now!"

But she scarcely heard him. Her world lay in ruins about her, and when he put his arms around her and led her to a chair she was too broken-spirited to resist him.

Nothing that could happen to her mattered any more. Her last hope in life was gone!

Spring came again at last. March slipped by, and April mingled with her tears and sunshine a whispered promise of summer.

It was the time of happiness, but Anne hated the thought of summer, for she felt that she could never be happy again.

The dark days of the winter had seemed to match her own sorrow, but the growing brightness that each week brought mocked her with its laughter.

The sharpness of her grief was dulled, and where her heart had been one great, quivering wound it was becoming numbed so that she felt only a dull ache.

She had a blurred memory of that night of horror at the inn—sometimes she would recall how she had slipped away from Cyril Fordham and would see herself again trudging along the dark country roads

until sheer exhaustion had brought about her collapse at the feet of a kindly policeman, but it was like looking back on a bad dream.

She had spent the remainder of the night at the police station, and from there she had made her way back to the village where she had lived with her grandmother, staying with some old friends who made her welcome and asked no questions.

She did not feel that she could face Myra or New York again. She made no effort to see Hugh Paget, for she felt that he had cut himself out of her life entirely and would never wish to see her again.

She tried to lose herself in her work, but to no avail. Her friends had helped her to obtain another position, and at the beginning of April she found herself working in an interior decorator's in Long Beach.

As her pain died she had a queer feeling that she was quite apart from her fellow workers, as though she herself no longer lived but merely looked on from a distance at the life about her.

She believed her heart itself was dead, and yet there came a day when it began to pound against her side so that it seemed to shake her slender body.

She was leaning against the railings of the board walk, gazing out across the ocean, while dusk brushed blurring fingers over sea and sky until they seemed to blend into a shadowy whole.

A chilling breeze and the falling night had driven most of the strollers to their homes, and as Anne turned to retrace her steps, only one figure remained in sight.

It was that of a man walking toward her, and there was something in his carriage that sent the blood rushing to her face long before he

was near enough for her to see his face.

As he looked at her he halted in his stride. Then, in a few swift paces he was at her side, his hat in his hand, his dark eyes filled with a dumb appeal.

"Anne!" he breathed.

She caught her breath, putting a hand to her throat.

"Hugh!" she stammered. Then her voice became like ice. "What are you doing here?"

"I traced you—Myra told me the truth," he said jerkily. "I went to your home—made inquiries."

She gave a bitter laugh.

"I'm glad of that. Not that it makes any difference to me."

"I didn't expect that it would," he said slowly. "I—I've not come to excuse myself—after the way I've behaved, I have no right to breathe the same air that you breathe. But I had to tell you. Nothing you can say to me can be punishment enough. I don't even ask your forgiveness, because I'm not worthy of it. I only want to tell you that I know myself for the vilest creature that ever lived——"

"Hugh!" she cried out at the sight of his agony. Her voice broke, and when she next spoke it was frozen.

"Why did Myra tell you? It would have been better to have left matters as they were."

"She was ill, Anne. She very nearly died of pneumonia. She told

me that she couldn't go out with that on her conscience. She gave me the name of your friends, and at last I found that you were working here."

He broke off, then he gave a strangled laugh.

"Well, why don't you tell me what you think of me?"

Her heartbeats seemed to choke her. She saw the man before her through a mist—his eyes pools of anguish.

As she stared at him he made a vague movement.

"I've nothing else to say," he murmured. "I'll go—you won't want to see me longer than you can help."

Something round her heart seemed to snap.

"Hugh!" At last words came with a rush. "You can't go when I—I want you so!"

Somehow she was in his arms, her wet face against his coat, his lips close to her ear, murmuring her name over and over again.

"My darling, do you mean you'll take me back?" he whispered, kissing the tip of her ear.

"I must!" she sobbed. "You see, I can't go on living without you."

His lips closed on hers, and she clung to him very closely.

In the deepening heavens the evening star shone out. It was like the star of their love—clear and bright and steady, a thing of lasting beauty.





Eyes Of Blue

By Gertrude Schalk

POLLY'S first suspicion that anything was wrong with the tall young man who had come slowly down the subway steps, was when he staggered across the platform to lean weakly against one of the stone roof supports.

She hadn't noticed him particularly when he came down the steps, not more so than she noticed any one. The Coopley station was

usually a very quiet place during the evening and it gave Polly plenty of time to see nearly every one who entered the station. From her magazine stand at the foot of the steps she could see up and down the long platform that stretched dimly away to end in round black holes.

It wasn't unusual for the station to be totally deserted with only Polly to give it life. And when this

tall young man came into Polly's range of vision, she noticed him at once.

Polly hadn't worked in the subway news stand for six months without seeing plenty of young men staggering a bit, but there was something about this particular young man—— Well, Polly buttoned her sweater higher under her firm, white chin and leaned over the counter to see him better.

Faintly in the distance came the low hum of an approaching train. It would soon come charging up into the station, jerk to an abrupt halt, and then go swinging on into the farthest black hole. And that train would take this interesting young man out of Polly's life before she had even seen his face clearly. Just why she thought he would be interesting, Polly didn't know.

And then, while she tried to get a good look at him from behind the stacks of magazines and papers, it happened!

The tall young man swayed drunkenly and pitched forward to lie with his head hanging over the edge of the platform!

Polly forgot to breathe; forgot for the moment to do anything but hang over the counter in sudden terror, eyes wide, fingers rigidly gripping the edge.

The lights in the entrance to the tunnel changed suddenly from green to red. The train was almost in the station.

In a flash Polly knew what would happen in less than two minutes. With a sudden roar, the long black train would sweep along, taking the young man with it.

Somehow she found herself running down the deserted platform, her breath coming chokingly in little gasps. It seemed years until she reached him. Her feet were like

lead, her knees jerky; it was an effort to run. Yet she reached him, fell wordless beside his prostrate body.

The train was so near, its thunder filled the station, vibrated from roof to ground, from wall to wall. In the bottom of the pit the steel rails hummed.

With fingers icy cold Polly laid hold of his coat, dragged at his shoulders. But he was heavy, lax, utterly useless. Frantically Polly looked up. The black hole showed the faint illumination that preceded the oncoming train!

A sob worked its way up into her throat. It was a desperate little sound that died before it was born. And still she pulled.

She was talking to him, begging him to move.

"Please—move. Please help me."

And then he stirred a little and Polly pulled him back—just as the train roared up the pit and dashed past, thrusting her back with the force of its going. Polly bent her head over the young man's; hid her face close to his tumbled dark hair while the train jerked to a sudden stop, brought there by a white-faced motorman who had seen, too late, the huddled figure on the edge of the platform.

In that brief moment before the car doors opened to let out a stream of curious passengers and guards, Polly saw the lids quiver over the young man's eyes. Quiver and lift to show eyes of a startling blueness that mirrored extreme pain and bewilderment.

For that age-long moment Polly's brown eyes looked into the stranger's blue ones and something was born between them. Afterward it seemed absurd that so much could have happened in that short glance. Afterward it seemed impossible that

he could have felt the same queer thrill that tingled from Polly's bright head to the tips of her cold fingers and on down to her toes.

But then all Polly knew was that in one short moment everything had changed for her. Nothing seemed quite the same. Not even the grimy, dull station or the familiar chilly magazine booth with its rows of brightly colored magazines and candy. One swift look into a pair of blue eyes and life changed for Polly of the golden hair and brown eyes whose sweet face looked at the world nightly from behind stacked magazines.

And then all was confusion. Eager hands lifted her to her feet. Excited voices questioned her. Then the miraculous appearance of an officer who took charge efficiently. Then the distant clanging of the ambulance and the white-coated internes who rushed down the steps.

And last, the limp figure of the blue-eyed man being carried away in a stretcher up the cement steps. Up into the night air away from Polly.

They sent Polly home in a taxi, an unheard-of luxury. And Polly whose mind was still whirling dizzily around blue eyes and tumbled dark hair, didn't even notice that the man took the longest way home so that the fare would be larger. Home to the furnished room that took up such a little space on the third floor of Mrs. McGinnes's boarding house.

Polly let herself into the dim hallway, feeling for the first time the full weariness and pain of her recent experience. She could barely drag herself up the narrow stairs. Each flight seemed a mile long to her aching feet and legs. Yet she made it somehow. At last she reached her

own room and the lumpy iron bed that called to her weary body.

Somehow she got between the cotton sheets and almost immediately she fell asleep.

The next morning Polly awoke to find herself a heroine; an honest to goodness celebrity. Mrs. McGinnes herself brought up the morning papers to show Polly the glaring headlines telling the story of the girl who had saved Peter Mortimer, Jr. from a horrible death!

Peter Mortimer, Jr.! Polly gasped. The son of a millionaire! Peter, Jr. had had a sudden attack of dizziness while waiting for a train and fallen almost to his death. The papers hinted that maybe he had indulged a bit too freely in the expensive liquors that had been served at Lydia Holly's party whence he had wended his way.

But Polly, who had been so close to Peter in those moments when death had seemed only a matter of seconds, knew that he hadn't been drinking.

With glowing eyes Polly studied the picture of Peter, Jr. that headed the story. He was so clean-looking, so handsome, so clear cut.

Polly thrust the paper away firmly. It wouldn't do her any good to start thinking so much about such a rich young man. It would mean only a broken heart in the end.

What if he had said something to her with his eyes? What if he had told her as plainly as if he had spoken that she was sweet?

Alone in her tiny room, Polly hid a suddenly warm face in her hands. She was being crazy, thinking that way. Wonderfully crazy!

She stood in front of the cheap bureau with its cracked mirror and studied her reflection. She saw a girl with golden, silky hair that clung

to her small head like a bright cap; golden-brown eyes shaded with heavy dark lashes; softly curving lips and a dimple.

Wistfully she regarded herself. Was she really sweet? Suddenly there was the distant sound of the telephone downstairs. After a short interval Mrs. McGinnes's strident voice came charging up the stairway, calling her name.

"Miss Blake. Oh, Miss Blake—telephone."

Polly's heart stood still and then raced madly on. Never since she had left Spartensburg to work in the city had she had a phone call. It was six long months since she had trudged down the Coopley station steps for the first time, the touch of the country still hovering on her rosy cheeks.

Hurriedly she ran down the three flights of steps, her small feet barely touching the worn oilcloth covering. Then breathlessly she took the receiver, spoke into the mouthpiece, and heard a man's voice.

"Yes, this is Polly Blake. . . . Yes." She was dimly aware of Mrs. McGinnes hovering curiously in the background. "Yes, I can come . . . the Mortimer place? . . . Yes. . . . I'll wait." There was a sharp click in her ear.

Dazedly she stood staring at the dead phone. She was to wait for a car to come for her, to take her to the Mortimer home. Some Doctor Kenswil wanted her to come. He had said that he would be waiting for her!

Somehow Polly found herself back in her room putting on the shabby, rough, wool coat with trembling hands, drawing on the little beret. She slipped mended gloves on numb fingers and walked sedately downstairs again and out into the cool morning air to enter the gleaming

automobile that waited at the curb. Sitting back against plush cushions, she stared, wide-eyed, through shiny glass windows, breathing in softly the faint fragrance of the single red rose in the cut-glass container. She laughed silently as she saw Mrs. McGinnes's amazed face peering out from behind the dusty lace curtains at the parlor window.

It was like a dream. A Sunday-morning dream when one snuggles down under the covers for another nap and pretends that a trim black-clad maid is waiting outside the door with a steaming breakfast tray!

Polly was afraid to close her eyes, even to wink for fear it would all disappear. The car, the smartly clad chauffeur, the luxurious robe hanging across the silver rail.

The car purred its way across town into the wealthy section of the city and finally came to a stop before a severe-looking house of Italian marble, its iron-grilled door grudgingly open. The chauffeur hopped out and opened the car door for Polly, then led the way to the grilled door.

Afterward all that Polly remembered was being ushered into a long, dimly lighted room, warm with the slow fire of logs in the big fireplace, homelike with its rows and rows of books lining the walls, and comfortable with its huge leather chairs and small tables.

A man rose to meet her when she entered. He was a keen-eyed man with a square chin and a determined manner.

"Miss Blake?" He came forward briskly. "I am Doctor Kenswil." He held her hand for a moment, then stepped back to look at her closely. "I was sorry to disturb you this morning, especially after your trying experience last night, but I

have found it necessary to call you. Mr. Mortimer is in rather a bad way."

Polly caught her breath sharply and awoke from her trance to stern reality. Peter Mortimer was in danger! All at once it didn't seem absurd to be wanting to cry because Peter was very ill. It seemed natural for the hot tears to rise to her eyes, to spill over and run down her cold cheeks.

"He—he isn't——" She couldn't go on; it was hard to talk coherently. But the doctor seemed to understand.

"No, but he is pretty bad," he said quickly. "He was very ill last night. In fact, we've been working over him all night." In that moment Polly saw the weariness in the doctor's eyes, noticed the gray shadows under his eyes. "He has a bad case of ptomaine poisoning. Something he ate at the party I imagine."

Polly didn't say a word. She stood silent waiting, her eyes fixed desperately on the doctor's face.

"I suppose you are wondering why I sent for you," Doctor Kenswil smiled.

"Mr. Mortimer is—well, slightly out of his head. Has been all night and most of the morning, and he has been calling for you ever since we got him to bed."

Polly steadied herself against a chair.

"Calling for me?" she asked faintly.

The doctor's eyes were suddenly quizzically warm.



She stood in front of the cheap bureau with its cracked mirror and wistfully regarded herself. Was she really sweet?

"Now that I have seen you, I don't blame Peter," he said whimsically. "He kept calling for the little golden-haired girl with the brown eyes; and so—here you are."

A warm sensation swept through Polly's cold body. He had remembered her! Peter had remembered her hair, her eyes. He had called for her. She felt a vaguely dizzying feeling of delight.

The doctor pinched his lip between capable-looking fingers.

"I am taking full responsibility for young Peter," he went on, "while his father is abroad. That is why I sent for you. I think it will help Peter a great deal to see you, to have you near him. Come, let me take you to him."

Without another word, the doctor led the way out of the library into the hall. Silently Polly followed him up the broad stairs, her steps faltering a little. Finally they stopped before a half-closed door.

Polly drew back shyly, sudden color flooding her cheeks.

"Doctor—Doctor Kenswil," she begged softly, swiftly. "What—what shall I do?"

It was odd how frightened she was—how her hands trembled and her knees grew weak. Peter was on the other side of that half-opened door. Peter of the tumbled dark hair and blue eyes; Peter who had whispered such marvelous things without actually saying a word!

The doctor looked down at her and smiled suddenly, paternally.

"Just be yourself," he said kindly and then he pushed open the door.

Peter lay just across from the door in a huge four-poster bed. His long body looked oddly flat under the smooth covers, his hair deeply black against the white pillow. His eyes were closed, but the moment Polly moved across the room, the white lids flickered up.

"Hello," Peter said breathlessly, weakly, sanely. "I've been waiting for you."

Polly forgot then that this young man was one of the rich playboys who broke poor girls' hearts. She forgot that until the night before she had never seen him. She forgot everything in the world except that before her lay the only man in her

world—and he wanted her, he was calling for her!

"I came as soon as I could," she said swiftly, running forward. Her cool fingers slipped into his, clung tightly.

Peter lay quietly a moment, contentment stealing into his eyes.

"You'll not leave me any more, will you?" he asked. "You'll stay here where I can see you?"

And Polly, slipping into the bedside chair, her brown eyes alight, nodded slowly.

"Of course I'll stay," she answered simply.

They didn't know when Doctor Kenswil left the room. They were too absorbed in each other.

"Funny thing," Peter laughed softly. "I don't even know your name."

"Polly—Polly Blake." Polly dimpled shyly. "I know your name," she added quickly. "It's Peter—Peter, Jr."

Peter flushed a little and his eyes grew brighter.

"I love the way you say that," he whispered. "It's so sort of sweet. Just the way I thought you would say it." He sighed happily. "Polly—Polly, dear—a wonderful name."

It was heaven to sit there and look deep into his blue eyes, hold his hand, and listen to his whispered words.

Suddenly he turned to her, a wistful gleam in his eyes. "Polly dear, would you—would you kiss me just once?"

Her heart stood still, then raced madly on, disturbing the bit of lace at the neck of her dress with its throbbing. Polly bent over him and the room seemed to swing about with terrific speed until suddenly she felt feverish lips under hers. Gentle lips that sought hers hungrily, lifted to press closer.

Peter lay back with a sigh.

"That was worth getting sick for," he said softly.

Polly felt the blood leave her face and then sweep back in a rush. Heaven and earth and paradise gained! With just one touch of a pair of lips Polly knew the meaning of love, that magical feeling that mere words cannot describe.

His fingers gripped hers, and he turned over until he could look right into her eyes, then Peter, Jr. went to sleep.

Doctor Kenswil coming quietly into the room later, nodded in satisfaction.

"Just what he needed," he murmured. "A good sound sleep."

"He's better?" Polly asked.

"Much better," the doctor nodded quickly. "He began to be better the moment he saw you. And now, young lady, you may——"

He stopped abruptly as the bedroom door was flung open and a girl appeared on the threshold. She was a beautiful girl, slim, arrogant, with fiery dark eyes and sleek hair. A girl clad in expensive clothes and cloaked in a whirlwind of fury.

"Doctor Kenswil!" she cried stormily. "I want to see you!"

The doctor stiffened. "This is neither the time nor the place for an interview," he said coldly.

"What do you mean by——" the newcomer went on furiously, then stopped short as she saw Polly. For an instant Polly saw the dark eyes fairly glitter, then they turned deadly black. "So, she's still here!"

Polly couldn't understand the girl. With puzzled eyes she looked from the doctor to the girl. The doctor appeared cool, but Polly saw a tiny nerve quiver in his cheek.

"If you wish to speak to me, Miss Holly, come outside," he said softly, moving out into the hall.

So that was Lydia Holly! The girl who had given the party last night. Polly's eyes were suddenly troubled. What had the papers said about Lydia Holly and Peter? They were not engaged, but just a friendly agreement, or had they said "expecting an interesting event from that quarter"?

Outside the door Polly could hear the doctor and Lydia Holly talking. She tried hard not to listen, not to hear what they said. But it was hard not to, they talked so loud.

"What do you mean by sending for that girl to come here?" demanded Lydia shrilly. "Playing up to the papers like any common, cheap——"

"What do you mean?" interrupted the man sharply.

"You know what I mean," the girl cried. "All the afternoon papers have it—'Girl heroine sits beside bedside of man she rescued'—'Millionaire and magazine girl brought together at bedside.' It's splashed all over every paper in town! And to-night's edition was supposed to carry the announcement of our engagement!"

Polly gasped. She felt suddenly as if some one had dashed a glass of ice water in her face. Peter engaged to Lydia Holly!

"Since when have you and Peter become engaged?" the doctor's voice asked, curiously cold.

"Wouldn't you like to know!" taunted the girl. Then suddenly angry again, she continued: "But you've got to get her out of this house! I won't stand for it!"

"You won't?" grimly Doctor Kenswil answered. "What will you do about it?" It was very evident that there was no love lost between the two.

"Oh, I know you don't like me, never have," Lydia Holly's voice re-

plied, sharp, penetrating. "Just because Peter's father left him in your care you think you're going to order his life for him. Well, you're not!"

"And it was from just such flighty know-nothings that Mr. Mortimer wanted me to guard his son. While I am Peter's doctor I shall do what I think best for him."

"You won't send her away?"

Harshly Lydia's voice rose.

"No, I won't."

There was a momentary silence. Then the swift rush of feet going down the stairs and Lydia's voice floating back.

"I'll fix her. You see if I don't!"

The outer door slammed shut. Lydia Holly had gone.

In the room Polly relaxed. Unconsciously she had been tense, strained. Her heart was heavy now.

She looked wistfully at Peter. For just a little while he had belonged to her. Now he was some one else's.

Even as she looked he stirred uneasily, and called, "Lydia—Lydia."

Polly swallowed hard and blinked back a tear. How silly she had been to even think that Peter meant what he said. How could he when he was out of his head? Even now he thought and dreamed of Lydia. Lydia—the girl he was engaged to!

It had been so sweet to sit beside him and look into his blue eyes, smooth his tumbled hair. It had been the sweetest thing that had ever happened to Polly. But she knew she had been silly to think that she meant anything to him. She should have known better.

Polly's eyes were misty. She didn't blame Peter. She blamed herself for putting too much credence in what he said. She should have remembered that he was very ill. And sick people never mean the extravagant things they say.

Quietly Polly withdrew her hand

from Peter's. His fingers clung unconsciously and it was difficult to slip away. But finally Polly managed it without waking him.

She walked across the room, a slim drooping figure, despair mantling her shoulders. She shouldn't have come in the first place, she told herself. If she hadn't, then she'd never have loved Peter. Still, that was silly to wish that when she knew very well that even if she had never seen Peter again after that moment in the subway, she'd have loved him.

The thing to do now was save him from further embarrassment. When he came to himself and realized what he had done in sending for Polly, he'd feel very badly. He would have a hard enough time squaring it with Lydia Holly without having Polly to think of.

So Polly went quietly down the steps and let herself out into the bright afternoon sunlight. She had been in the Mortimer place a long time. For a moment she stood hesitatingly on the doorstep buttoning her shabby coat against the little chill in the wind.

It was then she became aware of two men standing in front of her on the walk. One had a camera, the other a notebook. When she looked up startled, the one with the notebook cried cheerfully:

"That's it, smile, please, Miss Blake!"

There was a click of the shutter, and Polly realized that her picture had been taken! With a gasp she hid her face and fled down the steps to the street. Past the grinning reporters, down the quiet street she ran. That meant more embarrassment for Peter when he got well. Her picture taken leaving the Mortimer house!

Tears welled up in Polly's heart.

overflowed into her brown eyes. She'd do anything to save Peter's feelings; anything to keep him from being heckled by the public and the newspapers.

She walked all the way home, trying dully to figure a way out for Peter. After all, she owed him something. He had brought love into her starved heart; brought momentary happiness into her life that would live deep within her forever. She owed him something for that.

Turning into her street, the first thing Polly saw was a small group of men lounging on her front doorstep. Halfway there she stopped. One of the men had a camera. She knew they were more reporters waiting for her, wanting to hear her story, hoping for a romance from the "little magazine girl and the rich young man." Peter Mortimer, Jr. was sufficiently important to warrant front-page space every time.

Polly bit her lip. She couldn't face those men, tell them her story. She couldn't and wouldn't!

Turning swiftly she ran back to the avenue and turned the corner. Walking quickly up the avenue she caught her breath. Now where



Terror-stricken, Polly stared up at him, seeing his hard eyes, his grim mouth. "But I haven't done anything," she cried. "You can't take me. I haven't done anything!"

should she go? Barred from her house by reporters, there was no other place for her.

There were the movie theaters. But one couldn't stay in them all night, Polly knew. Besides, she had only a little over a dollar in her purse. And she was getting awfully hungry.

She walked on, turning corners, following the main streets until she found a cafeteria. It was a very cheap place and the patrons were everything that Polly had always avoided with scared eyes.

But somehow now she wasn't afraid of leering eyes and weak mouths. She wanted food.

She went up to the counter, reading the signs. Cheap prices for beans, coffee, rolls. Polly decided on that. She must conserve her change.

Instinctively her hand sought her pocket, searched for the shabby purse, and encountered nothing but emptiness! Her purse was gone!

Some time between leaving her street and entering the restaurant she had either lost her pocket book or had it taken from her. What a horrible thing to have happen to her now! Just when she needed every cent.

With her head held high Polly turned and left the cafeteria, trying not to hear the sibilant whispers that followed her, or see the knowing-looks. Out in the street again. Dark now with a light rain falling.

The faintness intensified. There was a sort of all-gone feeling in the pit of her stomach. Warily Polly trudged on. She'd have to go back home now or walk the streets all night. Besides, maybe the reporters would be gone.

For the first time she noticed she was in an unfamiliar part of the city; dim, broken down, suggestive of underhanded dealings. Men stood in dark doorways, women sauntered past speaking out of the corners of their mouths.

Polly shuddered and began to walk faster. Twice she turned corners seeking the main avenue, only to find herself right back where she started. All the streets seemed to end right where they began.

The rain was soaking into her coat, wetting her face, chilling her all the way through. But she didn't mind that. All Polly wanted now was to find the way out of this maze of dark streets. She hated to ask any one; she didn't like the looks of either the men or the women.

So she walked on and on until some one stopped her. A rough hand caught her elbow, twisted her around.

"Say, you," a harsh voice asked. "What do you think you're doin'?"

Polly shrank from the bulky figure, tried vainly to see his face.

"I bin watchin' you," the man went on grimly. "You bin paradin' this block for the last half hour. What's the big idea?"

Polly blinked childishly, trying not to get too frightened.

"I—I was just going home," she stammered through suddenly dry lips.

"Oh, yeah?" The man moved and Polly caught a glimpse of a shining shield on his coat. "Well, I think you and me are goin' t' take a little ride and tell it to the judge."

Terror-stricken, Polly stared up at him, seeing now his hard eyes, his grim mouth. A plain-clothes copper.

"But I haven't done anything," Polly cried pitifully. "You can't take me. I haven't done anything!"

The detective was marching her toward the corner now where a blue box reared its ugly form. The loungers in the street were following them casually, walking almost on Polly's heels.

Polly couldn't know that the district she had unwittingly stumbled into was the home of the city's worst gangsters. And here every stranger, man or woman, was spotted immediately and taken up by the police as suspicious characters.

To the suspicious detective, Polly's behavior was decidedly shady. Her walking around the block twice told of some dark intrigue. So Polly was booked for a ride to the night court.

Down at the corner, they stopped at the blue box. With astonishing suddenness, two brass-bottomed po-

licemen appeared from nowhere and stood guard, eying the growing crowd. They were taking no chances.

With sick eyes Polly watched the detective ring for the wagon. A sob escaped her lips. She was going to be arrested—she was arrested—for doing nothing!

Polly huddled deep into the collar of her coat, trying to hide her pale face from the leering gaze of the crowd. Out of the turmoil of her thoughts came one that stood out glaringly.

This would mean more unpleasantness for Peter. If her name came out in court, what wouldn't the papers do with the story! From the Mortimer mansion to jail within twelve hours. How they'd play it up.

The wagon backed up then and Polly stumbled into its narrow confines. She was conscious of a blur of white faces and then the bulky form of an officer darkened the entrance. The ride itself was less of a nightmare than what followed in the night court. At least she had been safe from prying eyes in the wagon.

The judge was hard-eyed, grim and weary. The clerks, the attendant officers, were all bored with this nightly duty. The motley assembly of pick-ups, dirty, unwashed, some frankly seeking a night's lodging, made her sick.

Polly shuddered into a corner of the bench and kept her eyes hidden. It couldn't be true. She wasn't really arrested. It was just a dream—a horrible dream.

But it was no dream when a man came and yanked her to her feet to go and stand before the judge. There was a jumble of words, questions. She heard her own voice answering. The charge—"suspicious character."

"Name?" That was the only question she really remembered. She answered "Mary Smith." She remembered the weary grimace of the judge and his words, "Another one."

There were more questions and then:

"Better hold her until to-morrow. We've got a bunch of suspects."

Dazedly Polly stood in the center of the narrow cell and looked at the walls, the barred door, the shelf bed with its grimy blankets.

Prison! Hysterical laughter bubbled up in her throat.

She sank wearily down on the grimy blankets. She felt so queer inside. Her head whirled dizzily.

Sometime during the long night Polly fell back on the bed and slept the sleep of exhaustion. A sleep filled with brass-buttoned men and slim, vivid girls who looked like Lydia Holly and who pointed at her and sneered.

Suddenly it was morning, with a weak sun casting pale oblongs of light on the floor. Polly awoke sluggishly and lay quietly for a moment, her eyes wonderingly seeking the bare ugly walls.

Where was she? Then in a rush it all came back. She was in jail.

Before the full horror of it dawned on Polly, a woman was at the door flinging it open, ordering her out.

There was no time to wash. She was rushed into line with the rest of the disheveled folk and paraded through long corridors into the courthouse. The last in the line, Polly tried hard to keep up with the rest. But she felt so weak. Her knees were stiff and her body ached all over.

They finally reached the courthouse, a sorry line of derelicts waiting for the order to go into the courtroom. There were several men

in the hall. And once, at a sharp command, Polly lifted her head. There was a familiar click and then a satisfied voice said:

"Thanks, sarge. Got a good one that time." A man moved away carrying a black box.

A reporter. For a moment stark fear filled her heart. Had he got her picture? Then she relaxed wearily. No one would ever recognize her now the way she looked.

It was then that Polly heard a familiar voice. A girl's voice, shrill, petulant.

"Oh, he makes me sick!" she was saying. "He's been raving all night."

"Have they found the girl?" asked a perturbed masculine voice.

"No, the little fool. Thank goodness she had the sense to keep out of sight. But what I want is to have her kept out of sight, dad."

"But Lydia, my dear child, you must be reasonable."

Polly's head came up. Lydia Holly! Lydia in the courthouse. What was she doing there?

Then Polly remembered. Lydia's father was Judge Holly.

Polly turned her head cautiously. Lydia and an elderly man stood near a window. Polly wanted to ask about Peter. More than anything else she wanted to know if he was all right. But she couldn't ask Lydia. She mustn't call attention to herself and make more scandal for Lydia and Peter.

Wistfully Polly looked at Lydia, slim, vivid. No wonder Peter loved her. She was gorgeous, lovely.

And then while Polly stared, Lydia turned suddenly and saw her! Blank surprise and then amazed recognition flooded her face. Dark eyes widened and then narrowed cruelly.

And in that moment Polly knew that something terrible was going to happen to her. She felt it. She

sensed it in the triumphant glow that grew in Lydia's eyes.

Too late Polly hid her face. Behind her she heard hurried footsteps, then Lydia and Judge Holly were gone.

The order came to file into the courtroom. Polly faltered along in the rear, her mind a perfect maze of suspense. For the first time she remembered Lydia's words. "I want her kept out of sight."

Could she have meant Polly? Feverishly Polly went back in her mind trying to remember all she had heard. But it was hard. She felt so queer, so light-headed. It was an effort to think.

Dully she sat through the opening of court and the swift disposal of cases with the rapid disappearance of the derelicts. And then there were only two left.

Polly huddled in the corner of the bench shivering. She was almost past feeling anything. Even the thought of getting up to face the judge and the courtroom didn't rouse a spark of fear. Apathetically Polly stared into space.

Then her turn. "Mary Smith—suspicious character."

Somehow she walked unsteadily across to the rail and lifted haggard eyes to the judge.

"Mary Smith," he said slowly. "What have you to say for yourself?"

Polly swallowed hard, wet dry lips frantically. Now was the time to explain herself, clear her name.

"I—I was lost." It was funny how hard it was to talk, to utter ordinary words. "I was walking down—the street——"

"Come, come," impatiently the judge broke in. "We haven't all day."

Desperately Polly swallowed once again, hurried into speech.

"I was lost and I was trying to find—find my way——"

"Your honor!" a new voice, imperative, interrupted. A man came forward to speak confidentially to the judge. "My client here has a charge to make against this girl."

The judge looked at Polly sharply.

"A charge of what?" he demanded.

"A general nuisance to my client. This woman has been annoying Miss Holly for some time!"

Miss Holly! Lydia Holly was charging her with something she couldn't even understand clearly. Polly clung to the rail with both hands to keep from falling. A veil seemed to be drooping over her eyes, hiding everything.

Hardly aware of what was going on, Polly was shunted back and forth from bench to rail, barely hearing Lydia Holly's confident voice telling of Polly's alleged threats, blackmail.

At last the judge spoke gently to Lydia, and she bent toward him confidentially.

"I won't press charges if she'll leave the city and never come back!" Her dark eyes sparkled, and her whole slender figure was drawn up excitedly.

The judge smiled at Lydia and talked to her in a low tone.

And then behind them all there was the sudden commotion of the door opening, and swift footsteps coming up the aisle.

Peter Mortimer, Jr. stood hanging onto the rail, looking sick, his face white, haggard.

"She's here!" he cried hoarsely, raising one hand, holding out a paper to the judge. "I saw her here."

"What is the meaning of this?" the judge demanded, stern and imperious.

Through a haze Polly saw Lydia go creeping back, her vivid face slightly pale, her eyes black with defeat.

Officers were hurrying up to remove the man who dared to burst into court like a madman.

Polly, sitting back like some one apart from it all, saw Peter shake off their hands.

"She's in this picture." He pointed a trembling hand at the newspaper. "I know she's here. Where is she?"

Another man came hurrying up to stand by Peter. Polly recognized Doctor Kenswil dimly. The judge evidently recognized the doctor, too, for he turned to him quickly.

"Can you explain this madman's actions?" he asked sternly.

The doctor nodded. "This is Peter Mortimer, Jr." Even the judge looked mollified at the name. "And he is looking for Polly Blake who disappeared last night from the Mortimer place. He thinks he recognizes her in this picture taken some time early this morning in the court here. Of course we aren't sure, but Mr. Mortimer is anxious to see the young lady."

Over in the corner Polly wanted to run and hide. But there was no place to run to and then her legs refused to do her bidding. To her tortured ears came the voice of the judge explaining:

"There is no Polly Blake on my record. Only a Mary Smith who has had a charge made against her by Miss Lydia Holly."

Doctor Kenswil threw back his head suddenly.

"Mary Smith?" he said sharply. "Charged by Lydia Holly? Where is this Mary Smith?"

His keen eyes searched the benches. Polly huddled deeper in her coat. Then Peter, too, swaying

a little with weakness, turned his head, seeking her with feverish eyes.

Peter saw her first—looked under all the grime and dirt and recognized her. With a little cry he was across the room reaching out his hands for her.

"Polly!" Then he was there beside her, touching her with tender hands.

Polly shrank from him, hid her face.

"You mustn't," she cried over and over. "You mustn't!"

But Peter wouldn't listen. He pulled down her hands to peer thankfully into her face. Put her cold fingers to his lips.

"My dear, why did you run away? Just when I'd found you." Against her hand, his lips moved softly.

Polly was crying now, the hot tears warming her cheeks.

"But Lydia—you're engaged to her."

"Hush." Peter put his finger over her lips, drew her head down on his shoulder, oblivious of the interested gaze of the spectators. "I am not engaged to Lydia. Never was, never will be. How can I be when I am engaged to you?"

"But you called to her in your sleep," protested Polly, burrowing her nose under his coat collar.

Peter laughed tremulously. "I dreamed she was chasing me and I was calling her names," he whispered boyishly. "Only you didn't hear the names."

Polly drew a deep breath. Suddenly everything was all right again. The past with its terrors, its fears was gone into the land of forgotten things. Nothing mattered now but Peter and Peter's arms and lips.

"I'm ashamed of you," he was saying tenderly in her ear. "Thinking I'd marry any one but you."

"I thought maybe you were dreaming," Polly whispered shyly.

"You mean, you thought I was out of my head." Peter kissed her on the cheek. "Well, if I was, I intend to be that way all the rest of my life, beginning this minute."

"Oh, Peter." It was heavenly to just lie in his arms and look up into his eyes. His dear blue eyes.

And then the doctor's voice interrupted them patiently.

"If you two don't mind continuing your love scene elsewhere, we had better move on." His firm hands guided them out through smiling lines of people, down to the waiting car.

Tucked against the plush cushions, Peter's arms about her, Polly sighed happily.

"I've already cabled dad to hurry back for the wedding," Peter said then, stealing a swift kiss from her lips.

A sudden flash of fear filled Polly's heart. "Do—do you think he'll mind?" She was a trifle pale.

"Mind what?" Peter murmured against her hair, happily.

"Marrying a working girl?"

His lips touched hers softly, then harder. Exultant laughter bubbled up in Peter's throat.

"Silly child. He doesn't care whom I marry as long as I love her. Besides"—Peter leaned forward and grasped the doctor's hand—"the doc thinks you're just grand. And what doc says goes with dad, doesn't it?"

Doctor Kenswil smiled and all at once he was kindly, gentle. So different from the cold-eyed man who had defied Lydia Holly.

"You have my seal of approval."

Peter turned her face up to his.

"Any more objections?" he demanded.

And Polly, with his lips on hers, murmured an unheard "No."



Blind Date

By Katherine Greer

SHIRLEY slipped hurriedly into her yellow chiffon, because it was the first thing her hand had touched when she had opened her closet door. She would have worn her old green taffeta, if she hadn't remembered that there was a rip in the ruffle. It really didn't make much difference how one looked for a "blind date." Most any old thing would do, for the man never was worth bothering about. She could think of any number of things she would rather have done, than dance at the hotel with this unknown friend of Isabel's lieutenant. But

she had promised to take Polly's place, and now there was no escape.

Poor Polly, who so loved to dance, that she didn't mind how stupid and boring the man was who took her, if he could just keep time to music, was in bed with a sore throat, and for once in her life didn't feel like dancing. Isabel had tried and tried to reach Walt Lawrence to tell him not to bring another man for Polly, but had not succeeded in finding him at his quarters.

"You'll simply have to make a fourth, Shirley," she had urged, when the two girls had met on the

beach for a swim after work. "I know the last man Walt brought for Polly was pretty terrible. But this one may be quite nice," she had added, hopefully. "Better than any of the others. Law of averages, you know."

Shirley Keith had allowed herself to be persuaded, because she had happened to have a free evening, and because she was willing to do a favor for a friend. Not because she was hopeful that this man would be any better than the rest. Young army officers who had no girls of their own to take to dances and were willing to take chances on strange girls were not the handsomest and most attractive ones in the service. Far from it. Shirley had learned from bitter experience that a "blind date" was either a funny, little, fat fellow about half her size, or a tall, skinny one who stepped on her feet, and had no conversation beyond the weather.

Shirley was the sort of girl who didn't care enough about going out to spend a whole evening with a man who didn't interest her. She was absorbed in her work. She liked to swim and lie on the beach, and she knew a few boys who took her riding and to dances as often as she wanted to go. She didn't care to go every night in the week, as Isabel and Polly did. Sometimes, she liked to be alone in the bungalow with a good book.

Isabel McGuire, who had curly auburn hair and dancing Irish eyes, and worked in a steamship office where she met lots of men, always had more beaux than she needed, and was generous about sharing them with the two girls with whom she lived.

Polly, who worked in a dress shop and saw only women, and was jolly and sweet, accepted Isabel's left-

overs gratefully, and invariably found an anticipatory thrill in "blind dates," even though they seldom turned out as she hoped.

But Shirley, who worked in the florist shop in the palatial hotel on the beach, saw enough of men during working hours to find only an exceptional one worth an entire evening, and had formed the habit of tactfully turning down Isabel's surplus supply, or passing them over to Polly.

"Well, you certainly are in for it to-night, Shirley, old thing," she murmured, ruefully, to the violet-blue eyes which looked back at her from the oval mirror above her dressing table. She smoothed down the dark-brown waves, which were still wet from her swim and refused to stay in place. "I have a hunch that he is going to be terrible—step on your feet, and hold you too close—if only he doesn't try to kiss you! You are taking no chances on that though! Understand? Beware of a walk in the moonlight—stick close to Izzy and Walt!"

"Shirley!" called Isabel from the lanai. "Are you ready? Hurry, will you?"

"Coming," Shirley answered, with a final pat to her shining hair and a dash of powder on her straight little nose. She stopped in Polly's room on her way out to see if she wanted anything before they left. But Polly was drowsy and comfortable, curled up among her pillows. Shirley actually envied her her sore throat!

Walter Lawrence was an ordinarily well-built, good-looking fellow, but beside the man who was with him, he looked insignificant. Shirley's eyes opened wide in surprise, as she looked up at the handsome, broad-shouldered stranger in his well-fitting evening clothes, who

towered above her as she stepped out onto the lanai.

"Miss Keith, may I present Mr. Phillips?" Walt said formally. Then added, jovially, "Shirley and Alec, in case you are interested. Last names aren't much use out here, are they, Isabel? If we're ready, let's get going. My feet are keeping time with the 'Hawaiian Vamp' now."

During the short ride over to the hotel, Shirley was rather silent. In her wildest flights of imagination, even the romantic Polly could not have hoped for a "blind date" as altogether attractive as this man who sat beside her. And for some reason, he seemed as speechless as she.

"Beautiful night," she murmured, realizing the moment the words were out that this was the most banal of blind date conversation.

"Yes, wonderful." He hadn't seemed to find it too trite. "I think there is a moon. There is nothing quite like your Hawaiian moonlight, is there?"

"You haven't been stationed in the Islands long, then?" she asked. More conversation which seemed very trivial.

"Oh, I'm not in the service. Sorry to disappoint you, but I'm just an ordinary civilian," he explained. "Over here for a short time on a matter of business."

"Oh, I see," murmured Shirley. Mentally, she added, "A business man, maybe, but certainly not ordinary."

During the second dance, a plaintive, softly crooning waltz, Alec Phillips found words to express his thoughts, which were strangely in accord with Shirley's. "I've never been on a blind date before, but I certainly never expected to meet a girl like you to-night. I had an idea that only the unattractive girls depended on their friends to secure

men for them. I was prepared to be a martyr for an awful little frump but——"

"Then, I'm a disappointment?" murmured Shirley against his broad shoulder. She didn't want him to see how unaccountably happy the indirect compliment had really made her.

"Disappointment! Good heavens, no! You're wonderful. I'm just thanking my lucky stars that I let myself be persuaded at the last minute. You see, I'm really a substitute. Lawrence had intended to bring another lieutenant for you, but the poor fellow got sick at the last minute and called it off. Lawrence was on his way out to the beach alone, when he just happened to see me coming out of the club and hailed me. I don't know him very well, and didn't want to come, but he was so insistent. And now he couldn't drag me away!" he added, fervently.

"Nice of you to say that." Shirley smiled up at him. "Anyway, I'm glad I'm better than you expected. And I feel exactly the way you do—about blind dates," she confessed. "Only from my point of view, the man is the one who is usually terrible. You are the exception," she finished, frankly.

"Nice of you to say that." He repeated her words, and grinned down at her. "Then, how did you happen to come?" he wondered.

"I'm a substitute, too," she laughed. "Pressed into service at the last minute. I was really quite cross about it—just dressed in a hurry, and didn't even try to look nice."

"If you had tried, I certainly would have been literally a blind date by this time! I can't keep my eyes off of you as it is. You are so lovely."

Shirley giggled, appreciatively. Of course this was just a line, but surely he couldn't say it in such a tone of sincerity if he didn't mean at least part of it. She didn't try to check the thrills of pleasure which ran up and down her spine. Why should it be necessary for a girl to know a man a lifetime to know that she liked him a lot? Shirley could tell in five minutes—and she knew that she liked this Alec Phillips better than any man she had ever met before. Wouldn't it be possible for him to make up his mind just as quickly?

Apparently it was.

From that second dance on things moved very fast. Shirley forgot her resolve to stay close to Isabel and Walt. Forgot her resolve to steer clear of moonlight. She and Alec wandered down to the beach arm in arm, and listened to the *swish-swish* of the waves upon the sand, and watched the huge silver disk of moon as it shown brightly down on the dark, smooth water. Now that they had gotten started, Shirley and Alec seemed to find a great many things to talk about. Afterward, Shirley couldn't remember exactly what. She hadn't learned much about him, so she supposed she must have done most of the talking. She had an idea she had given him her life history, but he hadn't seemed bored. And she had never been so happy in her life, and an evening had never gone so fast.

Precisely at twelve o'clock, like the end of a Cinderella ball, the orchestra played very softly the thrilling strains of the army bugle taps and it was over. Irresistibly, the girls lingered in the arms of their partners. Involuntarily, the couples strolled down to the water's edge.

Shirley didn't know what had become of Isabel and Walt. She didn't

care. She and Alec could walk the few short blocks from the hotel to the beach bungalow.

"Let's not bother about Lawrence and Miss McGuire." Again, he echoed her thoughts. "Let's walk along the beach in the general direction of your house. Your slippers must be full of sand already. A little more won't hurt."

"Let's," Shirley agreed eagerly. She remembered fleetingly the blind dates, who had tried to kiss her on the way home from dances, and she thought ruefully that this one would be the exception in that, as in everything else. And perversely, she was actually wishing that he would kiss her.

But he didn't. He didn't even put his arm around her. He just held her hand a longer time than necessary when he said good night on the steps of the bungalow, and squeezed it hard.

"I can't possibly tell you now how perfect this has been," he said, and his eyes seemed to be saying more than his words. "If only you could feel about it as I do!"

Shirley thought that she did, but she couldn't tell him so unless he became more definite. "I've—I've had a lovely time," she murmured, and knew it wasn't what she wanted to say at all.

"Then, we'll do something together to-morrow night?" he suggested, confidently. "Dinner in one of these queer chop-suey places, and then a ride up on the mountains—just us?"

"Yes, I'd like that very much," said Shirley.

"I know six o'clock is terribly early for dinner, but I doubt if I can wait any longer than that," he said, boyishly, as he left her.

"Better make it six fifteen," Shirley advised, teasingly. But she

didn't know how she could wait until then either.

As she slipped out of the yellow evening gown, with considerably more deliberation than she had used when she had put it on, Shirley admitted, honestly to herself that she was in love. This queer, excited, thrilly feeling which she was experiencing was not like anything she had ever felt before. Nothing but real love for a handsome, fascinating man like Alec Phillips could ever make her so rapturously, so radiantly happy, as she was at that moment. She would marry him tomorrow, if he asked her. And the best part of it was that she actually believed that he was going to ask her!

Isabel's red curls peeked around the corner of the door.

"Had a better time than you expected, didn't you?" she whispered, with amused satisfaction. Marvelous, isn't he? But I trust you didn't fall too hard, for I understand that he is already taken."

"Taken?" Shirley could have bitten her tongue, but the betraying word was out.

"Then you did fall," Isabel observed. "Though I guess not very hard in just one evening. I tried to warn you as soon as Walt told me, but I didn't have a chance to see you alone. Alec Phillips is rushing that rich Muriel Westover, who lives all by herself in the Russell place way up on the beach. Walt said that Alec Phillips knew her in New York, and followed her out here to beg her to marry him. It seems that he has known her all her life. He is a member of a prominent and wealthy family, too, though not as rich as she is, because she is an orphan with money in her own right. You know the girl I mean. You've

seen her at Moana dances. She runs with a fast, bohemian crowd. Very thin, and dark."

"Yes, I know her," murmured Shirley. A too vivid picture of Muriel Westover flashed before her eyes. A nervous little thing. All eyes, and a shrill laugh, and the most extreme clothes on the dance floor. Not the type she would think that a man like Alec Phillips would like, even if he had grown up with her. A wave of swift jealousy swept over her. "But he didn't act like an engaged man to-night," she defended guardedly.

"Made love to you, I suppose," inferred Isabel bluntly. "Just for a change. I suppose they all do."

"But he didn't," Shirley denied hotly. "He didn't even try. Only ——" she hesitated shyly. "He did seem to like me. He made a date for to-morrow night."

"Well, I wouldn't count on it too much. He was probably just making conversation. These rich society men have a different line from most of the boys we know," Isabel warned her, with sophisticated wisdom.

"He'll come," Shirley maintained confidently. "And I don't believe he is engaged, either. He and this Westover girl may be just good friends. Walt must be mistaken," she added.

But everything was spoiled. Instead of the happy dreams, the thrilling anticipations which would have possessed her had Isabel not come into her room, she was filled with haunting doubts, with a sickening fear that what Isabel had said was true.

"I don't believe it. I won't believe it." She punched her pillow for emphasis. "Why did he act the way he did if he didn't mean it? Why was he so eager to see me again—and so soon?"



Shirley didn't try to check the thrills of pleasure which ran up and down her spine. She knew that she liked this Alec Phillips better than any man she had ever met before.

With the sparkling, warm sunlight of a Honolulu morning, Shirley's uncertainties of the night before seemed to vanish. Of course, she was going to have dinner with Alec to-night. He was coming at six fifteen, or maybe six, so why not be happy in the meantime?

At four o'clock the phone rang.

Shirley answered. "Royal Florist Shop. Yes—yes, this is she. Why—hello." The businesslike tone changed to one of eager friendliness and pleasure.

At the other end of the line a masculine voice was saying hurriedly: "I'll have to break our date for to-night, Shirley. Some vitally important business has just come up, and I simply won't be able to make it. I really hate to break it. I'm horribly disappointed. But I hope you'll forgive me and understand. I'll call you the first thing in the morning."

"Oh, yes, I understand," Shirley answered dully. "Don't bother to call."

"But I shall call, the very first moment, Shirley"—he suddenly became alarmed by her tone—"you aren't angry or cross?"

Shirley forced a laugh which sounded carelessly unconcerned. "Of course not! I was really supposed to go on another party to-night, anyway. I was just wondering where to call you to tell you."

"Then, that's fine." Alec gratefully accepted her lie. "And I'll be seeing you soon."

"Not if I see you first," Shirley decided, miserably, as she turned away from the phone. No man could fool her twice. She might be susceptible and gullible, but she wasn't that easy. So Walt Lawrence had been right. Isabel had been right. How could she face Isabel? Even if her friend didn't say, "I told you so," she would be thinking it. Shirley decided that she just didn't have the courage to face her to-night. She would find something which would keep her away from the bungalow.

As if in answer to her unspoken wish, the young man who was the sports director at the hotel came into the shop.

"A dozen or so tourists are going out to Ishy's Gardens for a sukyaki supper to-night. They need an extra girl. Care to go along? I know you aren't keen about blind dates, Shirley, but you can be my partner, if you don't like any one else."

"Yes, I'd like to go, Louis." Shirley surprised him with the alacrity of her acceptance.

"Fine," said Louis. "Go as you are, of course. No dress-up clothes when we have to put on kimonos and sit on the floor. The crowd will probably want to go slumming in Chinatown afterward, or something that is old stuff to you, but you won't mind."

No, she wouldn't mind anything which would divert her temporarily. Help her forget that she had let herself fall in love with a man who was a cruel trifter. A man who had just been having a little fun with a girl who earned her living in a florist shop.

But the gay party at the quaint little Japanese tea garden did not make Shirley forget, though she made a gallant effort to be as gay as the rest of them. She sat on the cool matting floor, tailor fashion, and manipulated her chopsticks like an expert, and laughed at the admiring glances of the elderly strangers on either side of her—glances which she knew were admiring not only her skill with chopsticks.

The little tea house in which they ate was set up on a knoll of velvety Japanese grass, and looked down upon rustic, winding steps, and arched bridges over a miniature lake. Bewitching little geisha girls in gay kimonos had cooked their meal before their eyes on charcoal burners, and later entertained them with songs and music played on queer instruments.

Shirley had been at the tea house on numerous occasions, and knew that they were in one of several compartments, which were separated only by very thin, paperlike partitions. As she sat, at one corner of the table, she was very close to one of these partitions, so close that she leaned lightly against it. In a lull in the conversation at her end of the table, she could hear distinctly voices on the other side of the thin wall. A man and a girl were talking earnestly.

Suddenly, the familiarity of the man's voice penetrated her consciousness. Where had she heard that—why, of course—it was the

voice of Alec Phillips! Its vibrant depth, its resonance had been ringing in her ears all day.

"But, Muriel," he was saying. "I can't wait forever. Promise me—Leave all this and go back with me. You know that I—"

What Muriel "knew" was lost to Shirley, because of an outburst of hilarity at the other end of her table. But it did not require a great stretch of her imagination to supply the end of the sentence. Undoubtedly, Alec had said something like, "You know that I have loved you always."

Shirley felt faint and sick. Tears of shame and anger were very close to the surface. So this was Alec's "important business engagement." She realized now, that even after his telephone message, she had permitted herself to cherish a dim ray of hope that his excuse had been real, that he would come to explain it, and apologize the first thing in the morning. But now the last shred of doubt had vanished. The whole affair was exactly as Isabel had said. Her faith in men was shattered—her faith in her own judgment.

"A penny for your thoughts, little lady." The man on her right put his hand on her chin, and turned her head toward him.

"They aren't worth even that," said Shirley, and managed a laugh to take away the seriousness of the words. "Let's go down to the other end of the table near the door, until the rest are ready to go. It is so close and hot up here, I think it is making me groggy." She simply couldn't run the risk of overhearing any more of the conversation from beyond the partition.

The evening went on interminably—so different from the night before. But at last it was over. Shirley was thankful that Isabel was out and that Polly was sleeping soundly

when she returned to the bungalow. In another day or so, they would be so occupied with their own affairs that they would have forgotten about Alec Phillips. To Polly, who had not even seen him, and to Isabel, who had danced with him only once, he would be just a new man from New York, just one of the many. Shirley wondered how long it would take her to feel that way about him, too. They said that one could forget—in time.

His frequent telephone calls during the next few days, however, made forgetting impossible.

The first call was the next morning, just as she was opening the shop.

"How about lunch, to-day, Shirley, right there at the hotel?" he asked.

"Sorry," said Shirley, briefly. "We're very busy. Impossible for me to get away."

"Then, let's make it dinner to-night," he suggested.

"I have an engagement for to-night," Shirley said, icily.

"But I thought—" he began.

"Sorry," she interrupted curtly. "I can't talk now. I have a customer."

She couldn't understand why he had called again. But he had done a number of things she couldn't understand. There was just no use trying to figure him out.

Shirley was relieved on the third day when the calls stopped. She certainly had made it perfectly clear to him that she did not care to see him. Continued refusals were increasingly difficult for her when he was so persistent, and she had a feeling that if he kept it up much longer, she would be unable to resist him. And then it would all have to be gone over again. She had no use for a man who wanted to marry an-

other girl, and was flirting with her in the meantime.

After working hours, she spent more and more time on the beach, and less and less at the dances at the hotels, and places where the crowds of young people gathered in the evenings. She had no desire to encounter Alec Phillips on the dance floor, or Muriel Westover either. She swam every evening just before dark, until she was so tired that she was glad to go home and crawl into bed, and fall asleep a little while later over a book.

She had an opportunity to buy a small, secondhand outboard motor boat very cheap, and she hoped it might divert her. It seemed like a little mechanical toy, it was so noisy and bouncing, but it was safe enough, and rather fun. Shirley usually wore her bathing suit when she rode in it, in case she should get tipped over. She cruised up and down the beach within a safe distance from land. From her vantage point just within the coral reefs, she liked to watch the crowds of bathers at Waikiki. Sometimes there were so many of them there together, that they seemed just like a solid mass. Then farther along the edges of the bay, there was just an occasional swimmer. They were those seeking solitude, like herself, and a few of the owners of the private homes along the shore.

After an unusually hard Saturday at the shop, Shirley was too tired to swim, almost too tired to do anything, but she forced herself to go out for a short ride in her boat. Perhaps the salt air would clear her head, and make her sleep better, she thought.

She passed the crowds at Waikiki, just as the last quarter-circle of huge red sun dipped into the Pacific over toward China.

She followed the shore line a mile or so on her usual route, and turned back. It was nearly dark as she headed for home, for, in the tropics, there is no twilight.

She steered clear of a dark speck of driftwood which was floating in her course, and it was only as she passed it that she discovered that it had life. And a voice! There was a very faint, but unmistakable cry of "Wait—help!"

Shirley turned the boat quickly, just barely escaping an upset. She slowed up beside the speck in the water.

A slender, brown arm reached for the side of the boat, missed it, and the figure sank beneath the surface for an instant.

Shirley was about to dive in after it, when the small black head appeared again. She leaned far over and grasped the struggling form.

As the figure clung gasping to the rim of the boat, Shirley discovered that it was that of a girl, though she looked more like a small child.

"I wasn't watching where I was going," she panted. "I swam too far out. I could never have made it back to shore."

"Don't talk," commanded Shirley. "Here, I'll help you climb in beside me. Slowly, now—and easy—so that you don't upset us both. I don't want to have to swim in with you. We might not be able to make it."

The girl did as she was told. But the moment she ceased her exertions, she sank like a dead weight in the bottom of the boat.

Shirley did not try to help her regain consciousness. She hardly noticed her. She devoted her efforts to directing the boat through the treacherous coral to an unfamiliar landing. She supposed the girl lived in one of these houses along the

shore. She would go to the nearest one for help.

Just as she thankfully pulled the boat upon the sandy beach, her passenger groaned, and raised her head slowly.

"Guess I must have passed out," she murmured. "Silly thing to do. You certainly have done your good turn to-day," she added, flippantly. "Saved my life, all right. Though I don't know that you did such a good turn at that. Might have been better unsaved."

"Don't talk so much," commanded Shirley again. "Save your strength. You are awfully weak, you know. If you can just tell me your name and which house you live in, I'll take you home."

"The long white one, with the palm trees. I'm Muriel Westover."

"Oh." It was Shirley who gasped now. This poor, forlorn creature in the dripping bathing suit looked very unlike the gorgeously gowned girl she had seen at dances. With an effort, she continued, calmly, "If you'll wait here, Miss Westover, I'll go to your house, and bring some one out to carry you in."

"I'm all right now," Muriel Westover insisted. "Just give me a hand and I can walk to the house. I'd—I'd like to slip up to my room, before—some one—any one—sees me."

Shirley opened the side door of the low, rambling house quietly. She had an idea that the "some one" whom Muriel did not want to encounter in her present plight was Alec Phillips, and she certainly was not eager to meet him either.

But the desires of both girls were doomed to be disregarded. As they stepped from the darkness into the lighted hall, they came face to face with Alec.

"You!" he cried, staring at Shirley in amazement. "Why—what—

Muriel, what has happened? You look positively all in."

"I'm—all right," Muriel assured him pluckily. She turned to Shirley. "Meet my rescuer, Alec. I was about to drown my sorrows—and incidentally, myself—oh, not intentionally, of course—in the briny deep, when she happened along in a noisy little *put-put* boat, and brought me in. I—I—guess," her voice broke feebly, "I am sort of—all in—Alec."

She swayed toward him, and he lifted her in his arms, and started toward one of the doorways.

"I'll put her on her bed and call her maid and a doctor. Please wait," he commanded, authoritatively.

There seemed nothing for Shirley to do but obey. She was beginning to feel very weak and tired, too. A long couch was invitingly near. She sank down gratefully upon it.

Alec returned in a few moments, and helped her to her feet.

"Come into the living room, and rest there. I will light a fire, and I have ordered a cup of tea for you. You are all in, too."

He wrapped a warm shawl around her, and settled her among the luxurious cushions.

"Are you sure you are all right?" he asked anxiously, devouring her with his eyes.

"Perfectly," she replied. She found it easier not to look at him. "I did nothing but pull her into my boat and bring her in."

"A very great deal, I should say." His manner seemed to be rigidly restrained. "Very brave and wonderful. Of course, you don't know how grateful and thankful I am."

"Oh, yes, I do," Shirley said. "Of course, I would have done the same for anybody, naturally. I didn't know until we reached the shore that I had rescued your girl."



"Shirley darling! I love you so. Say you love me—that you will marry me."

"My girl! Why, what do you mean?" Alec exclaimed.

"Oh, every one knows that you came over here to marry her," she murmured. No need to tell him that she had more direct and personal proof.

"Good heavens! Is that what you think? How can you, when— Why, I wouldn't marry Muriel if she were the last girl on earth, and she wouldn't marry me, for that matter!"

"But you are with her all the time, they say. You are here now—you

——" She faltered, helplessly. Everything was so very mixed up. She needed an explanation, desperately, but she couldn't ask for one.

Alec drew a chair up beside the divan, and faced her with the quick determination of a new decision.

"I may be betraying a confidence, but I think Muriel will forgive me. I surely have some personal rights. And she certainly owes you something for saving her life——"

"No, no!" Shirley broke in emphatically. "Not a thing."

"Listen to me, Shirley," he said earnestly. "And try to understand. You are all wrong about my relation to Muriel Westover. She is merely the business which brought me out here. Muriel is an orphan, and my father is her guardian, or was. She is of age now, and he has no legal control—only a very deep personal interest and affection. She has always had a very nervous, restless temperament, so since she has been on her own, she has dashed around all over the world. Several months ago, she came over here, and took a sudden notion to staying here. Then, the next thing my father heard was that she had got mixed up with a wild crowd, and was about to marry a fortune-hunting scamp with a very bad reputation. So he sent me over here to try to induce her to come home. I used to bully her around when we were youngsters, so I was supposed to have some influence."

"But I heard you——" Shirley began, then stopped. The words which she had overheard at the tea house had been indelibly stamped upon her mind. They had had only one interpretation. But now, suddenly, they were filled with new meaning. Miraculously, a weight, which had been pressing down upon her, was lifted. "Promise me," Alec had said that night. There were other things one could promise besides marriage. "Leave all this and go back with me," had meant one thing to Shirley, and something entirely different to Muriel and Alec.

Alec ignored her interruption. "But I found that I did not have as much influence with her as I thought I had," he continued. "It has taken me all this time to convince her that this fellow is no good. Just this afternoon, I proved to her that he was really in love with an Hawaiian

dancer, and only after Muriel for her money. I think that is why Muriel swam too far out just now. She was awfully upset about it, and naturally, her pride was hurt terribly. I went in town to arrange about our passage, and when I came back I couldn't find her. None of the servants knew that she had gone in swimming."

"Then, the night you broke your date with me, you had to be with her?" It was a question, but Shirley knew the answer. She was afraid that he wouldn't go on, because she had so persistently refused to listen to an apology for the broken engagement.

"Yes. I discovered just before I called you that she was planning to elope with him that night. The only way I could stop it was to stay right with her. I made her promise then, that she wouldn't do anything without my knowledge. That she would give me two weeks to prove that she was making a mistake. If I didn't succeed, I would offer no obstacle to her marriage. The two weeks are up to-morrow. You can't know how I hated to break that date with you." The quality of his voice changed. "I could hardly wait to see you. I had hoped that you cared enough to trust me, to forgive me."

"I was awfully stupid."

"No, not that," he excused her, generously. "Naturally, you had no reason to trust me to that extent. You see, I was hoping that that first night had meant as much to you as it had to me, but evidently it hadn't. I shouldn't have expected you to fall in love at first sight—just because I had. A dozen times, I wanted to take you in my arms and kiss you, and ask you to marry me, but I restrained myself, because I was afraid it was too sudden. I thought I had better wait."

"Why did you think—that I couldn't—fall in love at first sight, too?" she interrupted, a little breathlessly. Her heart was thumping so violently, that she found her voice with difficulty.

"Shirley darling!" The stumbling little question was all that he needed. "You did! You care, too!" He was on his knees beside the couch, his arms around her. "It was because you really cared that you were hurt at my seeming neglect, and I thought it was just because you were indifferent! I love you so. Say you love me—that you will marry me."

But he didn't wait for an answer, then. His lips met hers in the kiss they both had been yearning for.

"I am the one who should be forgiven," said Shirley a little later, "for not trusting you." Then, she told him of Isabel's warning, and on top of it, her experience at the Japanese tea house.

"If you had listened at that partition just a few moments longer," he informed her, "you would have heard me tell Muriel that I had fallen in love the night before, with the most wonderful girl in the world!"

"Did you really say that?" marveled Shirley, joyously. "If I had only waited!" Then, she laughed, ruefully. "I guess it is true that eavesdroppers never hear good of themselves!"

"Nobody could say anything but good about you," Alec assured her ardently. "You are so beautiful, so lovely, so adorable." Then, suddenly, he remembered Muriel, and his duty. "I'll have to take Muriel back to my father. She is ready to go now. Then, I'll come straight back for you. Will you be ready, darling?"

"I will be ready any time," Shirley murmured happily.

"Sweetheart," he urged, with quick decision. "Marry me now. We could have a short honeymoon before we sail. I don't want to wait any longer. Would you mind very much if Muriel were on the same boat? She'd stay in her stateroom and wouldn't bother us. I'm sure you'll like her."

"I wouldn't mind a bit," said Shirley. "I don't want to wait either." Then, she seemed to have discovered a secret joke. She giggled softly, and dimpled adorably. "Maybe—on the ship—we could find a nice blind date for Muriel," she suggested. "As a rule, blind dates are terrible, but there are exceptions!" she added, looking at him meaningly.

"I'll say there are!" agreed Alec fervently. "I am about to kiss the perfect exception right now—darling."

From the very first, their thoughts and desires had been strangely in accord.





CHAPTER X.

AND so it went on, one day very much like the preceding day. Beth gave up her position at the store entirely so that she might be at home with Sondra and Tom. It had been at Jordon's suggestion, however, for it seemed to him that giving up her own financial independence brought her one step nearer his arms.

Tom devoted every minute that he could spare from his practice to Sondra. Talking to her, reading to her, trying in simple little ways to bring back some hint of memory. But he failed consistently.

She replied to him intelligently

Sondra

By

Philip Fair



A Serial—Part V.

enough, but she had no memory of anything that had happened in the past and sometimes was seized with fits of fear during which she clung to Tom piteously.

Gradually as life in the big old house adjusted itself again in normal grooves Sondra began to take a part in it. She went about with Tom and Beth and Jordon on

little excursions in the car, picnics in the country, long rides in the cool of the evening under a star-spangled sky in which a moon hung beautifully, tenderly low.

Life came in awkwardly and hesitantly the first time and then, under the warm spell of Beth's kindness, a bit eagerly.

Beth even gave a little Sunday afternoon tea when she asked Lafe to come and invited also Bessie Brody—hearty, young and strong and good-looking—from the notions in the basement of the store where Beth had worked.

And after a first timid interval Lafe sat close to Bessie and seemed to regard the young, healthy beauty of hers with a sort of awed worship and wonder.

And Jordon and Beth exchanged glances. Jordon's seeming to confess that Beth had known best about Lafe.

"You're never wrong about people," he said to her as he helped her get the simple little meal ready, while Tom played the piano for Sondra and Lafe led Bessie, blushing and laughing happily, through the paths of the old garden. "The heart of human nature is an open book to you, isn't it?"

"I wouldn't say that exactly," Beth answered slowly. "Perhaps, Jord, it's just that I like people and so I sense their needs. I knew that though that barren farm with its ceaseless round of work by day, tired bodies and sleep at night, might be enough for all of the rest of the men of Lafe's family there was something about Lafe that drove him to demanding more of life."

"And what about Bessie Brody? Is she the girl who can give a boy like that more? Or is she just going to be a snare and a delusion?"

Beth smiled.

"Now wouldn't I have been a fine one if I'd got that sort of a girl for Lafe? Bessie, Jord dear, is of the soil. Her father and mother died less than six months apart and left her alone a little over a year ago. They'd always been farm tenants, always dreamed of the day when they could have a place of their own

—you know the way people do dream. And the store with its roof and its walls and its endless procession of people has been a sort of prison to Bessie.

"She aches for the feel of the soil again and can you imagine any task being too weighty for that strong, gorgeously capable body of hers—any task that a man who loved her would ask of her? I can imagine her keeping a house, having her own kitchen garden and bringing up a little brood of strong, happy, good-natured little ones, while the man who's providing for her works his farm. I can imagine her doing that, Jord, and being deliriously happy doing it. That's why I asked her here to-day to meet Lafe—and look at them!"

Jordon looked out of the kitchen window to see Lafe a rose in his hand, holding it against the lovely color of Bessie's young face.

"Does that look as if I've made a mistake?"

"No," said Jordon, quietly.

And then, a dainty tea on the table, the young people were called to their places and there was the chatter and laughter of gay voices in the dining room.

And that wasn't the last of the parties that got together that oddly assorted but peculiarly happy little company.

And so the days slipped by.

It was one morning at breakfast—Sondra was sleeping late—that Tom looked across the table at Beth, his eyes unusually serious.

"Beth," he said, quietly, "I'm going to marry Sondra to-morrow. I want you to get things ready—do whatever is necessary."

Beth looked up startled, not quite believing her own ears.

"You—what?" she asked, staring at him.

"I'm going to marry Sondra," he repeated, a slight tremor of feeling in his voice. "I'm sure that if I have the right to be with her more, to be with her all of the time, she'll recover more rapidly."

"But, Tom, do you realize what you're doing? Why, you're linking your life with that of a girl who may never be right! No, you can't do that! I won't help you do that! Anything else but not that! Ask any other service of me but I can't help you—perhaps ruin your whole future."

"There isn't any use of arguing, Beth," Tom replied. "The thing is sealed already. I thought the whole thing out, from every angle before mentioning it to you. I know exactly what I'm doing and still I want to do it. If you refuse—then I must get along without you. I had hoped though that you would want to help me."

Beth leaned across the table as if in an effort to impress her words with more earnestness.

"I do, Tom! There's nothing in the world that I want to do more than help you! But this—isn't helping you! Why, it may be doing something that you'll regret later."

"Never!"

"Tom, what proof have you that Sondra can ever be a wife to you, that she can ever return the deep feeling that you're giving her and that you'll need from the woman you marry?"

Tom smiled.

"Just my own belief, Beth. There isn't any use of arguing. I've decided and not hastily. It's the only way that I can be with her enough, care for her enough. I wish you'd try to understand that."

The last came with a wistfulness that touched Beth. She looked across the table, about to speak

again but something in her brother's eyes stayed the remonstrance.

"If you knew how I loved her, Beth," he said in a low tone. "I've been amazed at myself. Things that in patients have frightened me and seemed hopeless seem as nothing to me with her. I feel equal to battling anything for her and bringing her through it well and happy. Sometimes I've tried to persuade myself that I'm giving my love credit with too much strength, I've tried to hold myself in, but I can't."

"I always end with the same thing—that nothing matters except that she belongs to me, and then everything will turn out all right. I feel as if in Sondra's case I've been given a sort of superhuman power—probably imagination just because I love her so much, but I've got to use it just the same."

Beth was silent. Finally she spoke:

"There's only one thing I can say, Tom. I'll help you, do everything I can. Anything you wish."

And so then they talked of simple plans for a ceremony on the next day in the gracious old living room. There would be no one there but the four of them and the minister.

"And will you take a wedding trip?" Beth asked a little breathlessly. She felt that such an undertaking would be madness but she knew that sometimes love is madness.

"Not yet," was Tom's answer and she felt relieved.

Beth went about preparations for the wedding as if in a daze. She had dresses sent up from the store and tried them on the docile Sondra whose hair had been finally washed back almost to its natural color.

A barber came to trim it smartly and Beth shopped for classic pumps and sheer stockings.

The garden gave a wealth of flowers which perfumed the living room and blossomed in brilliantly colored masses in the dim corners.

It was a strange little wedding party that stood before the minister at the improvised altar. Beth's heart ached poignantly as she looked at Sondra's beautiful figure delicately revealed by its ivory moiré gown, saw her lift her lips for Tom's kiss, her wonderful green eyes oddly lighted, still, vaguely puzzled.

Outside, summer was giving to the world one of its perfect days—a mellow Indiana landscape, sun-swept, breeze-kissed with a blue bowl of sky overhead that was transparently beautiful. The faint warm drone of living things drowsing over the sweetness of flowers that gave their wealth of fragrance to the atmosphere came in at the window.

It was a day for love and pledges of love. It was a day for beautiful ceremonies of life. It was such a day as augured well.

"Happy the bride the sun shines on——" Beth thought of the old couplet as she watched the minister going through the form of congratulating the two with a little more solemnity than was his wont.

Surely if a beautiful wedding day had anything to do with the happiness of one's life Tom and Sondra should have nothing to ask for.

After the ceremony Beth and Jordan went to the garden and left the two alone.

"My beautiful," Tom said, looking long and fondly into Sondra's eyes as he took her into his arms.

Her own eyes were happy as they looked up at him, her lips met his kiss with a wistful eagerness and she clung to him for a space and then drew back to veil her eyes with marble-white lids and hide her face against his shoulder.

"Oh, if—if only I could remember!" she said in that tortured tone. "I feel that I must have loved you sometime, that this has been a thing that's always been a part of me, but it's so confusing! I can't lift the veil that drops over the past, and it frightens me!"

Tom drew her closer with infinitely tender arms.

There was no use to tell her not to be frightened. No use to try to make light of the thing that troubled her. His it was to be patient, kind, understanding, to give her such a sure, steady feeling of safety and security that some time that cloak of fear and mystery would drop from her like an old garment for which she no longer had any use. No use to try to insist that she remember.

It must be enough for the present to have her in his arms, to know that she was his to have close to him during all of her hours, the happy, as well as those tortured ones when fear rose in her like a poison-tongued serpent and threatened to bring her to her knees.

"Darling," he murmured, "if you could only see as I do how beautiful you are!"

"Oh, am I really?" she asked, as if in doubt. "I'm glad to be so for you. It's such a poor little thing to give a man—just a little beauty. I wish, Tom—oh, I wish that I could have brought you more!"

"It's enough, darling, just to have you. I ask nothing more of life."

Sondra looked up at him wonderingly.

"But aren't you afraid sometimes?" she asked in a hushed voice. "Afraid of—of things about me; that I'll never remember, that we'll be denied so much because of that?"

Tom knew from the rich fullness of her voice, from the deep measured breathing that swayed her beautiful



figure gently, from the emotion evident in the very face of her, what she meant.

He drew her close in a passion of tenderness.

"Darling!" he murmured against her hair. "Darling!" And then when the emotion had spent itself a little and he dared trust his voice further: "You mustn't think of such

things yet, dear." He kissed her forehead gently.

They came misty-eyed to the little feast that Beth had prepared in honor of the wedding.

It was a gay little party—gayer than anything the lovely old walls of the dining room had housed for many a week.

Sondra laughed a great deal, gen-



Beth's heart ached poignantly as she saw Sondra lift her lips for Tom's kiss, her wonderful green eyes oddly lighted, still, vaguely puzzled.

tle, easy laughter that held a low note of happiness in which Beth felt that she found something slightly wistful.

She wondered as she looked at her brother and his beautiful bride if it were to be always that way—handsome, apparently happy, perhaps really quite happy and yet with the ultimate withheld from them behind

the veil that shadowed Sondra's mentality.

Sometimes, as she laughed and talked, she caught herself gripping her fork with the mad grasp of stark terror.

It seemed, still, to have been such a mad thing to do—this linking of Tom's young life with that of a woman with a veiled mind.

Jordon sensed it, somehow, and watched her anxiously. Toward evening when twilight made the garden a place of mysterious shadows and cool, soft fragrances he found an opportunity to take her there.

On the path to the roses, out of sight of the house, she turned and gripped his hands.

"I can't stand it!" she said, wildly. "Oh, it was such a mad thing to do! I shouldn't have allowed it! I shouldn't!"

"You couldn't have helped it," Jordon said soothingly. "Nothing you could have done would have stopped it, Beth dear. And after all, perhaps Tom knew best. Let's try to hope so—you and I. Even that may mean something."

"I know—but when you try to look ahead! When you try to see what the future holds for them—for him now, it all looks so black! You just can't see! It's like looking into a terrible storm—black, impenetrable and frightening!"

He put his arm around her gently.

"You're just nervous," he said. "You've had so much to do within the past few weeks. I'll be so glad, Beth, when you give yourself to me and let me do all of your worrying for you, let me take care of you and shield you from the hard things. My big house out there at Allendale is lonely for you, waiting, my dear, for the touch of the hands of its mistress. We need you, dear. I'm a very lonely man."

And as he left her that evening Beth, on tiptoe, clinging to him with hands that seemed loathe to let him go, whispered:

"I won't keep you waiting much longer, Jord."

Things moved on in the old house on South Fourth Street much as they had been.

A week passed. It was Sunday.

Beth and Sondra had been walking in the garden and Tom joined them.

"How would you girls like to take a trip with me?" Tom asked.

Beth looked up apprehensively. It seemed to her that she had been waiting ever since the wedding for something to happen. She wondered if this was it.

But when she saw the happy glory in Sondra's eyes, the gladness at any suggestion of Tom's, any opportunity to do his wish, she stayed the questions that rose to her lips.

"Oh, I'd love to, Tom—where to?" Sondra asked.

"To a little town in Ohio, darling," Tom replied, as he took her hands and looked happily down into her lovely face; he never seemed to tire of being tenderly considerate of her. "A little town called Old Washington."

He watched her face keenly as he said the last, very distinctly, but not with too much emphasis.

Sondra's countenance underwent a slight change. There was a puzzled look in her eyes.

"Old Washington!" she repeated the name. "What a strange name for a town!"

"Perhaps! Anyhow, we'll enjoy the drive, I'm sure. I'm getting a new car to go in—a little larger and heavier."

Afterward when they were alone, Beth turned to Tom apprehensively:

"What has happened that all of a sudden you've decided to go there?" she asked.

Tom didn't answer immediately. Then:

"Sondra has the birthmark of the women of Bjorkman's wife's family."

Beth stared at him a moment.

"Then—then she must be Mimi Bjorkman!"

"She may be," corrected Tom.

And then after a long silence during which Beth stared at her brother, a thousand thoughts flying through her brain.

"But that isn't the most important reason I have for wanting to make the trip. You know there is a current theory that the cure for almost every ailment is hurried along by taking the patient to his home soil—if the trip is possible; there seems to be a belief that the conditions that started one in life have the power to help one through it. I haven't much faith in theories of that sort. I don't know that any proof has ever been brought for it, but I'm going to try it.

"I'm going to take Sondra back to the house we think she was born in—that big old brick place that's being used as a hotel now. It may have some effect."

Though he tried to speak calmly Beth could see what a tremendous effect even the idea had on him. He was struggling in the grip of a great emotion, based on hope.

"I'd like to have you go with us, and Jordon if he will," Tom went on.

"Oh—I—I—can't!" Beth started to say with the feeling that she could not stand going there and then seeing her brother's hopes crashed into despair. It would be too terrible to go into that house and watch Sondra, try to read into her every movement some gleam of a return to her old self and then finally be forced to admit that there was none.

She couldn't endure that.

She felt that it was even foolish for Tom to go.

It would be frightful to know, to actually know that Sondra would never be able to lift that veil that shrouded her mentality. Better the uncertainty, than the knowledge that there would never be any hope for them.

"I had hoped you'd want to go," Tom said, a hurt tone in his voice.

"Oh, I would if it was anything else, Tom! Do you think it's even wise for you to go?"

"Yes—somehow I feel that a great deal depends upon it, that it is going to mean a great deal to Sondra and me." And then after a little silence: "Won't you come, Beth? You've been my mainstay all through this. I'd like to have you with us, when this happens—the thing that I'm sure must happen."

He paused for a moment and then continued in a more impassioned voice:

"Oh, it's got to happen! Surely a man can't pray with all of the strength he has, give the best that is in him in effort and still go unrewarded, unfulfilled! God couldn't be that cruel, Beth!"

Beth took his hands and soothed him.

"No," she said gently. "God couldn't be that cruel. And I'll go, Tom. We'll start any time you say. I'll get in touch with Jord. I'm sure he'll go."

And as Beth had supposed, when later that day he came to see her and she told him of the plan Jordon agreed to go. He could leave his office. His assistants were quite capable of handling anything that might come up, and his time would be hers until Tom's experiment was over.

Beth looked up at him, her eyes misty with gratitude.

"You know you've been awfully sweet to me," she said.

"If I have been," he said quietly, "it's because I have to be. A man can't help being that to the woman he loves, Beth."

And once more Beth felt the deep strong current of his love surrounding her with its protectiveness.

It would be nice to belong to him, she thought, nice to have him always with her, to do things for her, to lean on when life crushed in a little too hard.

He was so strong, so poised, so possessed, so ready to deal with the buffetings of a thoughtless world.

And so the new car was brought to the door and in due time Beth and Sondra and Tom and Jordon and their baggage were packed in and it started smoothly on its journey to Old Washington.

As the miles receded under their wheels and they drew nearer and nearer the town Beth began to feel a tense eagerness.

When finally the main street of the village came into view through the shoulders of the two boys who were sitting in front, she felt a tremor of excitement go through her.

It was a quaint little town, quite as quaint and charming as Jordon had led them to believe.

Its stores drowsed on either side of the wide main street and its houses were calmly and sedately gracious with their flanking of rich lawn, promise of the fertile fields that lay back of them.

It was such a place, Beth thought, as they rode slowly through it to the other end where the house they were bound for was, that one could take to one's heart and love; a place to live fully in and die peacefully. A place all natural calm and beauty—no restless artifice, or pretense.

Beth was a little bit awed by the house she saw as Jordon helped her out of the car.

She saw Tom helping Sondra with tender care, moving beside her toward the house, his hand lightly on her arm as if prepared for any emergency.

They walked in through the wide hall, to the great room used as a lounge.

Beth felt a little tremor of excitement as she looked at Sondra and wondered if it all originated within herself or if she really did feel a current of some strange thing eddying about her.

Sondra walked about the place, touching things—the old furniture that had evidently been in the house since its erection, bits of bric-a-brac. She stood at one of the long white windows and stared out into the quiet village street for a long while, while Tom stood near as if prepared for anything that might happen.

Finally, with a strange and almost startling suddenness, Sondra turned and walked out through the rooms used as dining rooms and on straight to the kitchen.

A startled woman in an apron looked up, and started toward her.

But the rebuke that she would have uttered died on her lips.

She stood staring at Sondra as if transfixed. While Sondra stared back, her hands working nervously with the new silk bag Tom had given her.

"Who are you?" the woman asked finally.

At the sound of the woman's voice Sondra turned blindly and rushed back through the house Tom's name coming in startled fright from her lips.

"Sondra, what is it? What is it?" Tom asked gently, though Beth could feel the undertone of excitement in his voice and wondered that he kept it so in check.

He soothed her gently while she stared about the place, her eyes wide with startled wonder.

"Oh, tell me, tell me—where am I? Where am I? I feel as if I'd seen all of this before in some dream!"



"Oh, tell me, tell me—where am I? Where am I? I feel as if I'd seen all of this before in some dream!" she cried.

Tom was holding her hands and looking at her intently, a sort of eagerness about the tenderness with which he regarded her.

"You feel what?" he asked, in a voice of suppressed excitement as Sondra stopped speaking.

"I—I—why, nothing! Wasn't it silly of me? I had the strangest feeling for a moment! Something—something"—she looked around at the other two, delicate color rising in her face as if in an almost shamed confusion—"it was like something

almost supernatural! A queer feeling that I can't explain. Perhaps it's that I've been riding too long. I'm not really used to long automobile rides you know!"

Then stepping a bit nearer to Tom and looking up into his face with eyes that were excessively tender in spite of the little laugh that she tried to force to her lips, she continued:

"You know I'm not used to all of the luxuries you've crowded into my life, precious man! Perhaps it's going to my head!"

The tenseness of the moment was over, something had snapped. The chord that had seemed about to gather up all of the loose ends of Sondra's life and give them meaning had snapped and they stood again with only all of those meaningless loose ends in their hands.

Beth knew as she looked at Tom's face what that moment with its terrific let down had cost him. She pitied him. While Sondra, who seemed to feel that something was expected of her chattered lightly of the trip, of a garden visible from the window, of the quiet beauties of the little town that was so peacefully living its life out in that lovely corner of Ohio.

Tom waited a moment, staring at the kitchen door through which he had caught a glimpse of that startled elderly woman. For a moment it seemed that he would open it and demand half madly why the woman had looked so startled, almost as if she had seen a ghost.

And then with an effort that was almost physically visible he controlled his impatience and followed the course that he thought was the better part of wisdom.

He arranged, with the boy who stood behind a small desk in the hall, for rooms for an indefinite time.

"I might want to leave to-mor-

row," he said. "On the other hand we may remain for quite a while."

They were shown to their rooms, high spacious chambers, furnished in the quaint old things of two generations ago—early American thumb-back chairs, hooked rugs mellow with age, patch-work quilts on the beds and here and there pieces of old Sandwich glass.

He watched Sondra as she moved about touching things again in that odd way. Suddenly she spoke.

"Why, Tom, look at this!" Her voice was filled with wonderment.

Tom turned and saw that Sondra had lifted from the floor a child's chair, a funny little thing worn and old and oddly friendly.

Tom watched her with the breathless feeling of not daring to speak lest he break a spell.

"Don't you love it?" Sondra asked. "I feel as if I ought to have known the little girl who sat in that—it must have been a little girl, I'm sure of that!"

And when nothing more came of it Tom smiled and took her hands again.

"It probably was a little girl, Sondra," he said gently. "A very charming and much-loved little girl."

"How strange of you to say a thing like that—when you don't know anything about whose chair it was! You must feel as I do about it—sort of attached to it already—and men don't usually feel those things!"

"I'm not just a man to you, am I, dearest?"

"No," on a sudden flood tide of emotion. "You're—everything—You mean everything good in the world to me!"

And he lifted her hands to his lips and kissed them for the words that he could not say.

The little party of four had dinner

that evening in the dining room of the great old house.

Sondra chattered happily and the others tried hard not to seem to be watching her.

Once Tom saw the little old woman whom he had glimpsed for that moment in the kitchen, peeping into the dining room with oddly inquisitive eyes. He stayed at the table then only with a conscious effort. He felt as if he must rush out to her and demand who she was, and why she had started when she saw Sondra; that he must make her tell him.

And yet, that would have been going counter to all of the plans that he had laid that were to bring Sondra back to mental health without any undue shock.

He kept telling himself over and over again that he must be patient. That he must let things develop naturally. That if he was to learn anything at all it must not be at the cost of a severe shock to Sondra that might take her forever out of his reach. And he must take no stranger into his confidence for fear that then Sondra might be annoyed.

The brain was such a delicate medium to work with.

After dinner they walked for a while on the quiet streets of the little village and as they returned to the house Tom was sure that he saw two faces peering out of an upstairs window at them.

He felt a little bit mad with a desire for action but he forced himself to walk quietly beside Sondra, answering her chatter.

He said good night to Jordon and then to Beth.

In their room, with the door closed on the rest of the world, Sondra stood long at the window, open to the sweet smells of the summer night in the country.

She turned finally, her hands stretched above her head in a gesture of abandon.

"Oh, Tom, I feel somehow, as if I were home finally, as if I were akin to things here, part of them, as if I belonged to all of these things, to those great old trees out there, to that lovely old bed with its patchwork quilt, to that little chair, Tom! Oh, you think I'm foolish, don't you? Just a silly girl—sillier than you ever dreamed I could be?"

"No, I don't, Sondra. Nothing that you could say would be silly to me, least of all that. Perhaps"—and he spoke very slowly with not too much emphasis—"you do belong to those trees, and this little chair."

And then she went to him, all yearning tenderness and nestled in his eager arms.

"That's the wonderful thing about you. You always understand. I feel that I could say anything to you and you'd know what I meant."

"You can, Sondra. I want you to always feel that way."

And the exquisite tenderness of that moment lasted until Sondra, utterly weary from the journey and the excitement of the day, closed her beautiful eyes and her body knew the complete relaxation of sleep.

Beth was up early the next morning.

"The morning is too beautiful to miss a moment of it," she said to Jordon when they met on the veranda of the old house. "And look! It followed us here. I told Bessie we'd be here!"

Jordon stood and looked at her face for a moment, lovely with its expression of suppressed excitement, her eyes bright, her cheeks delicately touched with color, her lips slightly parted over her even white teeth.

She was newly young and newly beautiful to him in that moment.

And then he took the card that she handed him.

"I've given up my job at the store," he read aloud. "I guess you know the reason why." He said after a moment: "Why, it's from Bessie!"

"It certainly is—and you see, I wasn't such a bad matchmaker after all."

Jordon laughed a bit ruefully.

"All I can do is repeat the thing I've said before—if you'd only give as much time to your own love affair as you do to other people's——"

"I know!" Beth interrupted tenderly catching his hand.

And then Tom and Sondra appeared and the four of them went to breakfast.

Sondra was as fresh as a rose still touched with morning dew. Tom's eyes rested on her with proud fondness.

"If you keep on looking at me like that everybody'll know we've just been married!" Sondra laughed.

"Do you care, Sondra?" he asked. "Do you care that the whole world knows we're terribly in love, Sondra?"

* And then he started slightly as he became conscious of a presence beside him and looked up to see an elderly woman, in trim cap and apron, a woman very like the one he had glimpsed in the kitchen, standing beside him.

She had the attitude of having been startled. She turned, without taking the order for their breakfast, and walked toward the kitchen.

Tom looked at Sondra anxiously. But her face was placid. She had read nothing unusual in the woman's action.

The door from the kitchen opened and the woman who had been work-

ing there the evening before came through, her face marked with excitement. She hesitated a moment beside Tom.

"What did I hear you call the young lady?" she asked, her voice shaken and the words coming a trace hesitantly.

"Sondra," Tom replied quietly.

The woman stared as if seeing a ghost.

And then a little cry came from Sondra.

She gazed at the elderly woman, an odd expression in her deep-green eyes.

"I—why, I——" but she seemed to be unable to go on with the question.

And the little woman, apparently frightened at what she had done, backed away nervously.

"Excuse me," she said. "Excuse me. I'm a foolish old woman, I guess. I just thought the girl looked like some one"—the words trailed into silence as she hurried toward the kitchen.

It was the boy who finally came and took their order for breakfast and served it.

But Sondra ate little.

"Tom," she asked eagerly, as the elderly woman vanished. "What did she mean? I have the strangest feeling about this place, about her, about everything here and yet I've never felt that I so belonged in a place in my life! What did she mean? Is she—is she—queer, do you suppose?"

The young physician hesitated. It was a temptation to try to drive home the thing that he was almost sure of. And yet fear of consequent shock stayed him.

He must wait, he kept insisting to himself. One misstep and all of his weeks of effort with Sondra might be rendered futile. The brain



Sondra reeled and fell heavily into Tom's arms, crying with her last conscious breath: "There's something weird about this place! It haunts me!"

was too delicate a thing to be handled anyway except with the utmost care.

"I don't know, my dear. Queer little old ladies might get queer ideas. Perhaps she knew some one once whom you reminded her of."

And that seemed to satisfy Sondra for the time being at least.

But later when Beth happened to meet him alone she questioned him.

"Don't you think it might be better to investigate? I mean question those two women? Surely they must see something in Sondra—I'd take their actions as almost positive proof. There must be a strong resemblance or something for them to

act as they do. But they haven't quite the courage to ask you. I suppose it seems too far fetched to them that Sondra might be their niece after all. Don't you think it would be wise to talk to them and then if they are almost sure you could work more positively on Sondra?"

But Tom shook his head.

"I know—you're getting impatient and so am I. I can hardly stand this waiting. But I'm afraid that if I talked to them—they're old, they might go to pieces, they might in spite of all I could do go to Sondra and upset her so that the case would be hopeless—I can't run the risk of her being shocked now. I've got to just wait."

"Why, it's maddening," Beth said, finally. And then a little more brightly: "But can't you just imagine what it would mean to those two dear little old ladies to find that Sondra really belonged to them?"

The day passed—a long and lovely one for Beth and Jordon, for Sondra—but for Tom a day of nervous waiting, of watching every movement that the girl he loved made, listening to her voice with ears strained for every intonation that might mean something to him.

Sometimes he felt on the verge of the miracle for which he waited and hoped, which his faith refused to let him give up.

When she stood at the old well in the yard where hollyhocks grew tall and colorful, their graceful spires laying long shadows on the soft green of the grass, she had looked up at Tom as if she wanted to say something. Her hands went out in an involuntary gesture and she closed her eyes and stood silent for a moment.

"What was it, Sondra?" Tom asked gently.

"Nothing—nothing! Just—well, that 'queer sense of something

strange about this place, as if something were reaching out to hold me, gripping me and—and I don't mind. I want to be held! I—oh, Tom, sometimes I feel frightened about it. It's uncanny!"

"It isn't uncanny, darling." He was on the verge of going on and saying something more that might have started a line of thought for her but he checked the words as they would have become audible.

And so the day passed and another one and Tom began to despair of the thing that he had hoped for, despair and yet at the same time to hope more madly, to call more and more upon his faith, upon his belief that a sort of divine justice would have to reward him for the belief that he had given.

The two little old women moved noiselessly about the big house when Tom and Sondra were in it, glancing at Sondra with questioning, almost frightened eyes from time to time and then again seeming to have settled to their usual routine of merely giving polite, comfortable service.

And then one day when Jordon and Beth had taken the car and gone to a rather distant town to visit some famous caves, Tom and Sondra walked lazily about the old village and finally, arriving at an old schoolhouse near the outskirts, sat down in the shade of a great tree.

Sondra looked at the building curiously when finally their gentle, easy conversation had lapsed into understanding silence.

"I've always felt that I'd have liked going to a country school," she said. "And that one looks as if it must be years and years old."

Tom looked at it critically.

"Judging from the architecture and material I should say it must be a hundred years old. They don't make that kind of brick any more.

Ohio was famous for its buildings of that sort of brick once. You've noticed them all through the State as we came."

"Yes," said Sondra a little eagerly. She was on her feet. "Let's see if it's open. I'd love to go in!"

Tom followed her. The door gave under their touch and swung back. They entered the old building, Sondra with a little cry of pleasure on her soft red lips.

The building had evidently been used as a church at one time and then later as a school and, lately, probably had been deserted. The seats were quaintly amusing old things. There was an old pot-bellied stove, red from the countless fires which had burned off its black polish.

There were a few pictures on the walls. Sondra, Tom beside her, began to examine the pictures, exclaiming over their quaintness, the funny old-fashioned clothing the people wore.

And then they stood in front of one of a group of school-children a class evidently gathered for some momentous occasion.

Sondra stared as if fascinated.

"Why, Tom—Tom, I know I must have looked just like that little girl when I was her age!" There was startled awe in her voice, something like fright. "I know I must have! Why—why, I don't understand! I—I—" She turned to him, her eyes wide and dark with fear of the unknown, of something that was beyond her understanding.

Tom's arm passed around her, protectively, as if he wanted her to be assured of his presence.

"I—why—it's so strange, Tom! Oh, can't you tell me something about it? It's me—it's my picture with those funny clothes I've never worn!"

And her hands reached up, fearfully and yet as if too fascinated to leave it, and took the dusty picture from the tack that held it—a faded, faint thing, old-fashioned and funny but with that face that was so peculiarly Sondra's, those wide calm eyes, looking out of it.

She walked out of the building—the picture held tightly in a grip that refused to relinquish it to Tom—as if in a daze.

Tom walked beside her fearfully. His very heart trembled within him. He seemed so near the thing that he had been waiting for and yet perhaps so tragically far. Something about the tenseness of her body, the rigidity of her gaze terrified him.

He had seen people look like that before! And he had always pitied them and pitied the people who loved them more!

And there was nothing he could do! It was out of his hands—going on its own momentum.

Where? Where? He wanted to cry the words aloud in his agony.

Where? Back to sanity or—he dared not even let the thought form in his mind.

Sondra walked fast, she almost ran back to the big house.

She hurried through the hall, the lounge and out into the big kitchen.

One of the two sisters who ran the hotel was there. Sondra put the faded old photograph down on the table in front of her.

She pointed to the figure in the middle, the one that was so weirdly like herself.

"Who is it? Who is that?" she asked in that breathless, tense voice. "Who is that?" The last came as a high, hysterical cry in which the frightened woman's answer was lost.

Sondra reeled and fell heavily into Tom's arms, crying with her last conscious breath:

"There's something weird about this place! It haunts me! What right have they to have a picture here of me in those funny clothes! What right have they!" And her hands were beating madly against Tom as he carried her through the hall and upstairs to her room.

The two little old women came and nervously, frightenedly offered their help but Tom sent them away.

He wanted to be alone with Sondra during those anxious hours. He put her to bed and saw with relief that the hysteria was leaving and she was quieting, though occasionally she started from the bed like a mad thing and Tom knew that in any one else he would have shrunk from the look of her eyes. With her it was different.

He felt, somehow, that he had been given some superhuman power to deal with her ailment. He gave her a light sleeping potion and then sat beside her all through the long hours of the night, refusing the assistance of Beth.

It was morning but Sondra had not yet awakened when he stepped into the hall to speak to one of the elderly sisters who had come to the door to inquire for Sondra.

"You must have guessed something," he said, "that we came here for a purpose other than just to be in the country."

The woman, her face pale, looked frightened but said nothing. Tom seemed to wait for her to speak and then, when the silence grew, he asked:

"What can you tell me about a little girl who was stolen from this house years ago?"

The woman started. Her face grew even whiter. She looked as if she had seen a ghost. She seemed to be trying to speak, but found herself unable to command her voice.

Tom touched her hand spoke gently: "I know it's startling you cruelly but——"

"It is her, then?" The little woman broke in with the words in a hoarse, strained voice. She seemed about to dart into the room where Sondra lay in that strangely deep stupor but Tom's hand stayed her.

"Please," he said. "She isn't fit to be seen yet. It may prove dangerous for her. She should have no excitement now."

And then the little figure seemed suddenly to come to life, to be trembling with animation.

"Oh, sir, you're not telling me that's the little girl we lost so many years ago? You're not telling me that you've brought our little girl back to us? But you are! I know you are! I knew it the moment I saw her—only I was frightened. It seemed like some one raised from the grave—and it frightened me!"

"You believe then that she is your niece?"

"Wouldn't you know it yourself by that picture, sir?" she asked. "That was her aunt, her father's sister, who was the image of her father and so is Mimi!"

"Then she was called Mimi?"

"Always—we always called her that!"

But Tom wanted to be still more sure.

"Would you recognize a birthmark that Sondra—or Mimi had?" he asked.

"Yes, they all had it, all of the women of her mother's family." And the little woman went on to describe the slight blemish that marked Sondra's lovely white skin.

"It's she beyond a doubt," Tom said.

There was no light that the woman could throw on the intervening years and so Tom had to go back

to the room in which Sondra lay and wait and hope.

At the first sign of her fluttering eyelids he was there beside her, his hand on hers. She smiled up at him, with that childlike quality that was one of the things that had so endeared her to him—a sort of sweet confidence.

"Good morning, Sondra," he said and his heart leaped at the sound of her voice, normal in its tone, answering him.

But gradually the peace of her face was replaced with a film of puzzled fear. She seemed to be trying to remember something, while the heart of the man who watched her began to ache anew.

Finally she spoke.

"Oh, I remember now! It was a picture! A picture I found in an old school and it looked like me, but it wasn't me and I couldn't understand! Tom"—her voice grew panicky—"tell me what it means! Tell me! I have such a strange feeling about it—as if—as if——"

She stopped speaking.

The young physician bending over her caught her restless hands and held them tenderly and then began to speak to her in a low, easy tone:

"Sondra darling, what would you say if I told you that once upon a time, quite a number of years ago, you had lived in this house, that you belong here, that all of the things that you have been living with for the past few days have been really part of the life of your family—that your kin have touched all of these things that you seemed to feel a kinship with as you walked around and touched them. That probably that little chair that you picked up the first night you were here belonged to your own mother when she was a girl. She might have brought it here when she married your father, per-

haps hoping there would be a little you to rock in it some day. And that the two little old women you've seen about this place are really your aunts?"

Her eyes had widened and a look of unbelief come into them while he talked, but it changed gradually to one of nervous eagerness charged with a sort of exhilaration.

"Oh, I know now—then it has meant something, this queer feeling I've had all along! Then—then I'm not—oh, I remember"—shuddering—"I remember, now! Those years of hate—those terrible, terrible years! Then I really do belong to something decent and fine! And I needn't be ashamed! Oh, Tom! Tom! It's too much to believe! It's too much to find out all at once! I feel as if I'm going mad—with—happiness! Then I am all right and I needn't be afraid of anything in the past! Oh, Tom!"

There were tears in her eyes and her voice was trembling, breaking under its weight of emotion.

"There now"—Tom tried to quiet her as she laughed and cried at the same time. "You mustn't give way too much, dear. Try to be quiet."

"Quiet! How can I be! There's so much I want to tell you! So much I've got to tell you! I—I——"

Tom soothed and tried to quiet her.

"But I can't be quiet! I've got to talk! I've got to! You really mean that I belong here? To this lovely old place in this lovely old town? I really do?"

And she kept on talking of the wonder of the thing that seemed like a miracle to her and Tom kept on assuring her until finally from pure exhaustion she slept again.

And Tom went out to get a breath of air with the feeling that the sword of Damocles hung over him.

It wasn't over yet—this heartrending uncertainty about Sondra's future. He knew that she hovered on a perilous mental brink.

He continued his vigil alone. He allowed no one to come into the room where Sondra was.

That evening Sondra sat up in bed and they had their dinner sent to their room.

They had been talking of ordinary things, of some flowers that stood on a near-by table, the sun setting in a ball of gold in the west.



*"Oh, aunty, it's so good to find that it isn't a world of hate after all!
It's so good to find my own family!"*

Sondra had been unusually light-hearted and happy and then suddenly she shuddered and put her hand out to grasp Tom's.

"Sometime's I'm terribly afraid of what's happening to me, Tom," she said. "And look at my hair—still smudged!" She shivered as if frightened. "I remember it, now—how they stopped that night they took me away from you and dyed it. They stopped at a place where they seemed to have had a room, they must have known some one there or arranged it—and dyed it with some hideous smelling stuff and cut it—I nearly went mad. They thought if they were seen with me the next day, driving somewhere that they were going, I wouldn't be recognized by police, who'd probably been notified, if my hair was black instead of blond."

She shuddered again and Tom, who took her in his arms, and said tenderly:

"Don't talk about it now, dear, if it's so hard."

"But I've got to talk—I want to talk to you! Oh, it's all so terrible, Tom! It's all coming back now—all of it! I—I have the feeling that I used to be here as a little thing—too little to really remember. It's just a feeling more than anything else—and then all of that hatred. Oh, that's come back with such horrible reality!"

And as she shivered Tom took her in his arms protectively.

"And then the farm—and Lafe. Lafe! Why, I feel as if I'd seen him—yes, it was Lafe who came to the doctor's for me after I'd gotten away from the men who kidnaped me. I—I"—she seemed to realize then that she was explaining something to Tom that had so far been a closed book to him—"I got away from them that very morning that they

took me from you. It was just dawn. They thought I had fainted from fright and left the car a minute to ask the way. They'd been talking about some money that would be mine, about claiming it, making me marry one of them—one of them was the man I had known years before as my father—and then making me claim the money that was to have come to me from some estate that had been held for me—and that was all I heard because I slipped out of the car and—" She shivered and seemed to find it impossible to go on.

"You needn't tell me yet, dear." Tom, his arm around her, gently smoothed her hair, as he spoke.

But Sondra was driven to talk:

"I slipped out of the car and crawled into the tile of a culvert to hide so they wouldn't find me when they came back and looked. There were snakes and all sorts of soft slimy things there. I nearly went mad!" She shuddered again, violently, at the memory.

"I must have crept out, though I don't know how long I stayed there, not daring to move, and finally wandered to the place where I was found. I remember it all now!"

She hid her face against Tom's shoulder while he soothed her.

"Don't, dear," he said, tenderly. "You know that I'm anxious to hear everything that happened to you but you mustn't force yourself to talk."

"I've—I've got to! I feel as if I can forget it more quickly if you know, too—if I tell you."

And so Tom listened, his heart aching with pity for her and flaming with indignation against the men who had kidnaped her after having made her youth such a period of torture.

Gradually he brought her to dwelling on the happiness of having

again found her own family for though there were many things he would have liked to know about her abductors he realized the wisdom of trying to direct her thoughts into a happier channel.

His heart lifted as he saw the terror leave her eyes and a smile hover fitfully on her beautiful face.

Meantime the little woman who had first lifted her startled eyes to Sondra in the kitchen of the huge old house came timidly, hesitantly, to the door and stood looking in, her face marked with mingled emotions—tenderness and a sort of half-fearful, half-expectant joy.

Finally she approached Tom, motioning to her forehead significantly.

Tom smiled and shook his head. "She's all right now," he said softly.

"Then I can speak to her! I can!" Her thin voice quavered as she reached out her hands and would have touched Sondra.

The girl turned instantly and as if by one accord they were in each other's arms.

"You are Sondra! You are my brother's little Mimi—the little girl we've longed for all these lonely years—my sister and I."

"Oh, aunty"—Sondra seemed to sense the relationship at once—"it's so good to find that it isn't a world of hate after all! It's so good to find my own family!"

Her voice was deep and vibrant with tenderness. That they had found their own was evident—there was no need for investigations and legal documents.

And then, the little old lady sitting on the edge of the bed, they began to talk of little things—as women will at a time when their emotions are keyed up to concert pitch, of little trifles about the room that had belonged to Sondra's mother; which of the rosebushes in

the garden she had planted and cared for with her own hands, which was the room in the great, gracious old house in which she had loved best to sit during her quiet hours.

Tactfully the little woman avoided all mention of those terrible years of uncertainty, when the minds of both parents were tortured with not knowing what had happened to their little girl.

A tap at the door, unheard by the two women, attracted Tom's attention. He went to get the telegram that the boy held out toward him.

His hands trembled a little as he opened it.

It had been relayed to him through Jordon's office and came from the judge at Merom and contained the news that the kidnapers had been caught when they came back to the scene of their crime—probably, Tom supposed, to pick up the trail of Sondra and try once more to get her and so claim the fortune that would be hers.

He found Jordon and Beth and turned the message over to the former, putting the case into his hands for the future, and then told them that they might see Sondra for a moment if they wished.

The meeting of Sondra and Beth was like a glad reunion. Sondra clung to the older girl.

"You've been so sweet to me all along," she said tremulously. "You couldn't have been nicer to your own sister!"

"Well, you are my sister!"

And Tom's eyes met his sister's gratefully. But that, he knew, was what he would have expected of Beth. She was too fine for half measures.

The atmosphere of the large, charmingly old-fashioned room was charged with the sort of tenseness that has to do with happiness, that

keyed-up high-pitched quality that brings tears to the eyes while the heart is fairly aching with happiness.

And, finally when it was possible to think sanely, Sondra was left alone again in the hope that she might sleep so that her worn-out brain might rest after all of its torture.

And then the others got to talk of arrangements for the future.

"You knew her instantly, didn't you?" Beth asked of the little aunt while the other one, who had joined them from the garden and had been told the news looked on smiling through a mist of happy tears.

"I'd have known her anywhere—the image of her father—the image of him!"

"And like as not you'll want this house, sir?" asked one of the two elderly aproned women of Tom. "And we're that glad to know Sondra's alive and well and married to a fine upstanding man like you that we'll be almost glad to give it up—much as we love the old place."

But Tom shook his head.

"No, aunty," he said. "We won't take the roof from your head. You'll stay here and I know Sondra will want to settle enough of her father's money on you so that you can both live without working—unless you want to, but you'll have the money anyhow. There's plenty for her besides from what Jordon has found out. I know she'd want you to keep the old house just as it is so that she can visit you once in a while."

And their old eyes shone with joy and pride.

"And you, Jord," Tom said turning to the other man, "can I count on you to take care of the legal end of this—look into everything so, even though we know ourselves that Sondra has finally found her own,

it will be water-tight legally—if the thing should ever come up?"

Jordon smiled.

"You're two laps behind, old man," he said. "I've been doing just that thing. I've gone over all of the old paper files. I have the whole story and have gathered the threads of fact—proof beyond doubting; proof that the veriest doubting Thomas would have to accept and I expect to have a confession from the two fellows they're holding at Merom before the week is out, a confession covering from the time when Sondra was taken from here a baby until the day she ran away."

The eyes of the little old women were bright with tears and the voice of the one was tremulous as she spoke:

"I remember it as if it were yesterday—the day Sondra disappeared. It was on a Sunday, just such a bright summer day as this has been and she had been put out in the yard in her carriage. No one ever thought of such a thing as crime in this little town. It came like a thunderbolt. We couldn't believe it. We thought at first some one was trying to play a joke on us when we found the empty carriage, but it was serious, terribly serious. It clouded the rest of our days. It seemed that the sun never shone here again—until just now."

The lovely old house that evening seemed again like the gracious home that it had once been as the two elderly women sat in the large living room and talked of the old days to the three young people.

It seemed quite right that toward eight thirty when the shadows of evening had settled over the lovely Ohio landscape, Sondra's voice should ring through the wide old hall calling Tom.

"Tom! Oh, Tom, darling, come up to me! There's so much for us to say to each other!"

And in the voice Beth caught the old nuance, that bright clear tone indicative of a brain in perfect co-ordination.

She knew instinctively that all was well with Tom and Sondra.

The two little old ladies vanished with gentle good nights and then Beth looked across at Jordon.

He smiled, rose and went to her, hands outstretched:

"We have a great deal to say to each other, too, I think, my dear." And his voice was muted with emotion.

"Yes, so much," Beth replied softly, and he knew from the tone that he was to hear, at last, the thing he had been waiting so long for, the thing which meant new life and everlasting happiness to him.

"I'm ready now, to be yours, Jordon, my dear," she whispered.

And as he folded her in his arms his lonely heart knew a new warmth.

THE END.



MY OWN

MY own, the night is dark for us—
 My own, the night is dark;
 But just beyond the shadowed lawns,
 Upon the far horizon dawns,
 A tiny mellow spark:
 It is the hallowed morning star,
 Which glows where hope and gladness are.

My own, the day is gray for us—
 My own, the day is gray;
 But from the sunset's afterglow
 The scents of roses rise and glow,
 And perfume all the way,
 Whose sweetness is remembering
 Our love was free from thorn and sting.

My own, the years bring loss and change—
 My own, the years bring change
 But we shall to each other cleave,
 Though storms of fate about us heave
 The billows that estrange,
 And ever feel devotion's sun
 Renew the pledge that binds us one.

FRANKLIN PIERCE CARRIGAN.



The Gay Heart

By Knight Jessee

THE train began to slacken its speed. The porter took Anne Warren's three suitcases and two hatboxes to the vestibule. He wanted to brush Anne's new beige coat, but she waved him aside. Anne was horribly frightened and she needed this precious second to compose her mind.

Back in New York—three and a half days behind her—it had seemed a lark. She and Peggy had giggled and laughed and planned. If Peggy hadn't been engaged to Ross Brown, Peggy herself would have come. Anne wished with all her heart that Peggy hadn't been engaged. Anne was never going to see this crazy ad-

venture through—never in this world.

The train jerked to a stop. The porter began putting off her baggage. Anne got uncertainly to her feet and walked down the aisle. Just before she got off, she took a quick side glance out the window. On the station platform, were stolid Indians displaying beadwork and pottery. Several other people were loitering about. Nowhere was there any young man with flaming-red hair. Anne gave a sharp little sigh. He hadn't come! Maybe he had broken his neck. She hoped fervently that he had. Which was a queer way to feel about her fiancé—the fiancé she had never seen!

Anne gave the porter a smile, and slipped a coin into his waiting hand. The train, having hesitated its customary three minutes, puffed on its way, leaving Anne, and the Indians, and the beadwork, and the pottery, and the loiterers, and the station behind it. Anne looked at her baggage. She looked at the station. The terror of the unknown beset her. Forty-second Street and Broadway seemed a million miles away.

"Goin' somewhere, ma'am?" asked a keen-eyed old man, lounging against an express wagon. "If you want a good hotel, there ain't none. But there's some sort of decent boarding places."

"Thank you," gasped Anne. She tried to think, tried to plan, but ideas jumbled chaotically in her mind. She looked longingly at the thin line of smoke which lingered in the sky, the last memento of the departed train. Why had she ever gotten off? Why hadn't she gone on to Los Angeles? She shut her eyes for a moment.

"Hello, dear!" said a voice so close to her left ear that she started nervously. "Awful of me to be late, but

those things will happen. You aren't mad, are you, honey?"

Anne's eyes flew open. She looked up—and up. How tall was this man anyway? He wasn't thin, either. He was big and brawny and well-dressed, with auburn hair and keen blue eyes that twinkled at her. Pinned to the lapel of his coat was a red carnation.

Involuntarily, Anne's hand flew to the faded red carnation fastened to her own coat. The man chuckled. His eyes smiled at some private joke of his own, as he said: "Haven't you got a kiss for the man you're going to marry, precious?"

Anne gasped. "Not—not here on the station platform!"

The red-haired man nodded. "Just as you say, pet! These your things?" He pointed toward the suitcases.

Anne stammered: "I didn't bring a trunk. I——"

"Sensible girl." He began matter-of-factly loading her baggage into the battered car parked at the edge of the platform.

"Why'n't you tell me you was the gal come to marry Jared Dawson?" chuckled the old man who had spoken to her before. "I'd 'a' told you he never got nowhere on time. I'll bet he'll be late to his own wedding." He chuckled at his own pleasantry.

Anne felt the warm color staining her cheeks. Oh, this was intolerable! Why had she ever let Peggy talk her into this wild affair? But it hadn't seemed so terrible then.

"Ready, Anne?" called Jared. "Hop in. We've got a long ride ahead of us."

Anne hesitated. She contemplated flight. There was only one disadvantage to that: she didn't know where to run. She set her teeth tightly together. With her

head in the air, she got into the battered car, disdaining Jared's outstretched hand.

"If you're going to be like that," snapped Jared, living up to his red hair, "you can close your own door! I won't!"

"The door can stay open till doomsday for all I care!" returned Anne with equal spirit. "I don't care if it jolts off!" They glared at each other.

Jared was the first to wilt. He gave the door a slam that resounded for blocks down the quiet street of the village. "If you're an example of a girl with a gay heart," he said, getting in and starting the car, "I don't blame employers for not hiring people."

"Oh," said Anne. "Oh, how I hate you!" She forgot her nervousness and her fear in a surge of fury at this impervious young man, who was driving with utter disregard of the numerous holes the street seemed to boast.

"Fine! That suits me. I hate women—all of 'em. Useless, conceited lot—the whole set of them!" Jared snorted.

Anne counted ten. She opened her mouth to speak. Then she counted another ten. After that she said quite calmly: "Did you write this advertisement yourself?" She took a crumpled piece of paper from her and thrust it toward him.

He went on driving at the same reckless pace. Never glancing at the paper, but he quoted word for word:

"Wanted—girl with a gay heart. Must be poor, pretty, young, blond, refined, five feet two inches tall. To act as my fiancée for two weeks, residing in my Arizona home for that length of time, properly chaperoned. I will pay two hundred dollars and provide round-trip railroad transportation. Girl must have been un-

employed for two weeks previous to taking this job!"

"You did write it then!" Anne sighed. "I thought maybe you got somebody to do it for you. But no! You made it up out of your own head. Good grief, a gay heart! That slayed me."

"What's the matter with that?" demanded Jared belligerently. "It tells everything, doesn't it? And didn't you read that ad—and answer and send your picture? And didn't I ship you the railroad ticket to come on out?"

"Exactly!" Anne bit off the word.

"Well, that proves it was a dog-goned fine advertisement!"

"Just chance!" said Anne. "If——" She stopped short. She had been going to add: "If Peggy hadn't happened to glimpse the advertisement in the newspaper, I never would have seen it." She decided she wouldn't mention her roommate and dearest friend.

"Perhaps you'd better explain just what I'm to do," she said abruptly, shifting the subject. "I'm not quite sure of my lines in this little comedy of yours."

"You'll probably need a lot of coaching," agreed Jared. "I should have specified in that advertisement that I wanted some one clever. You look just a little—well, slow. But of course, you are pretty. And brains and beauty never did go together."

That time Anne forgot to count ten. She didn't even count two. She just sputtered: "You're the rudest man I've ever met in all my life! I take back what I said a while ago. I don't hate you. I despise you! You're—crude! You're—impossible! I demand to be taken back to the station at once. I'll take the next train back to New York. I'll——"

"Too late," said the young man laconically. "Once you've crossed your bridge, somebody else burns it down. I'm the somebody in this case. I won't let you go back!"

"Oh, won't you?" said Anne through set teeth. She tugged away at the stubborn door with the idea of jumping out then and there. The red-haired man stopped the car. He put his arms about Anne and held her tight. She tried to jerk free. She doubled up her fists and beat against his chest with all her might. Angry tears gleamed in her eyes. Her heart thudded madly.

"Let me go!" she gasped. "In the letter you wrote, you promised on your honor as a gentleman not to even kiss me! Let me go!"

"I'm not trying to kiss you!" said Jared with the air of explaining something to a very small child. "I'm just keeping you from committing suicide. I'm not enjoying this any more than you are. Promise not to jump or do anything silly, and I'll let you go."

"I promise," cried Anne immediately. Instantly his arms grew slack. He moved over to his own side of the car and started the motor. They chugged along the sandy stretch of road in silence. Anne felt a distinct sense of let-down. She also felt rather foolish.

Twilight was shutting down on the desert. Across the long level plain, Anne saw rolling hills, bathed in rosy light. The scene was incredibly beautiful. Its loveliness caught at her heart.

"Don't forget that you're my fiancée. Please look at me as if roses and moonlight and star dust were in your glance, instead of vinegar! That is, when we get to the house. It's right ahead."

"Where?" Anna blinked in surprise. The desert seemed entirely

devoid of habitation so far as she could divine.

"You're not looking in the right direction. Over to the left." Jared flung out a long arm in an unconsciously graceful gesture. Anne turned to look.

"No wonder I didn't notice!" she cried. The long low rambling adobe building was tinted exactly the shade of desert sand. The car clattered up to the door, and three dogs came barking out to greet them.

"Afraid of the dogs? They won't bite, even if they are mongrels," said Jared, getting out of the car.

"Of course I'm not afraid!" Indignantly Anne stepped out of the car and began patting the wildly joyous dogs.

"They seem to like you!" Surprise was in Jared's tone. "And I'd have sworn that they had good taste, too!"

"You——" Anne began furiously. But at that instant a charming woman came out of the house. She hurried up to Anne and put her arm about her.

"My dear, I'm so glad to see you! I know you must be worn out from your long journey!" She kissed Anne's cheek gently, and then, linking the girl's arm in her own, drew her into the house. Anne thought to herself that she never had seen a more attractive woman. She was tall and beautiful, with a beauty that was full of dignity. Her hair was snow-white, but there was a look in her eyes that reminded Anne of Jared.

"I'm Jared's aunt, Meredith Dawson. Every one calls me Aunt Merry—and so that's what you must do, too."

Jared staggered in with Anne's suitcases just then. He set them down with a bang in the middle of the pleasant, spacious bedroom that

Aunt Merry had indicated. "I'll see if the cook has dinner ready," he said. He smiled fondly at Anne. "I know you must be starved, darling!" he murmured. Hastily he left the room.

"You were a dear to come and help us out," Aunt Merry said, helping Anne off with her coat. "I'm sure Jared hasn't explained a thing. Now has he?"

Anne shook her head. She wasn't sure whether or not this charming person was one of those before whom she must pretend.

"All we Dawsons hate to be laughed at," said Aunt Merry abruptly. "We're proud—foolishly so. Jared is worst of all. He went to Chicago about six months ago, and fell desperately in love with a fluffy little creature—a blonde."

Unaccountably, Anne felt a distinct sinking of the heart. So this Jared wasn't so impervious as he seemed!

"Jared had never been in love before. He wasn't up at all in modern, casual love-making. So when she eloped with somebody else, just a month before she was coming out here to be married to him, he took it pretty hard."

"Eloped?" Anne's heart began to beat normally again. "How awful!"

"Jared had told everybody about her. There wasn't a person for miles about who didn't know about Jared's Anne. Oh, did I tell you her name was Anne, too? It seemed sort of providential, yours being the same! When she jilted him, Jared was too proud to tell folks. So he thought up this scheme of advertising for a girl to come out here to pretend to be his fiancée. You'll stay here a while, and then he's going to decide that he doesn't like her—you, that is—as well as he thought—and jilt her—you, I mean!"

Anne took off her hat and ran her fingers through her sleek, shining gold hair. "Ingenuous plan," she said. "But why send clear to New York?"

"Because things do get around here so! If a person in one county sneezes, there's sure to be an epidemic of colds in the next county! Jared knew that no one would ever hear what he'd done, since he put an ad in a newspaper so very far away."

"Oh, I see." Anne fingered the fringe of a gay-colored Indian blanket flung across the day bed. "So I'm to be the buffer for Jared Dawson's pride, am I? Hm-m-m!" Her gray eyes snapped.

"Jared thought it would be a good chance to give some nice girl an outing in Arizona, too, with plenty of pay, some girl who had been out of work for quite a while. We read so much in the papers about the appalling unemployment situation in New York."

"Most commendable, I'm sure," murmured Anne. She saw that Aunt Merry adored Jared and wished to put him in the best possible light. "And I was certainly one of the great army of the unemployed."

She shivered slightly. She was remembering how she had tramped the streets day after day, looking for work. Library positions weren't so easy to find. And she had no training in any other line. The little shop where she had given out books for the last three years had yielded to the general depression and given up the ghost.

Finally there were but two alternatives left—starving or marrying Mainwaring Barrows. And Mainwaring hadn't actually asked her to marry him. That was the trouble. He had made love to her, of course,

quite desperately exciting love, at that. He fascinated her. He was the sort of sleek, well-groomed man about town who would fascinate any girl, especially if he made the love that was so finished and practiced an art with him.

Just thinking about Mainwaring made Anne's heart beat madly. He had been one more reason to send her on this wild venture into the Arizona desert. She wanted to get away from Mainwaring and his spell and think things out. When his tumultuous kisses were on her lips,

Anne was certain she loved him fervently and was only waiting for the time when he should declare his devotion and ask her to be his wife. But sometimes after he had gone and she tried to recapture some of the rapture of those kisses in retrospect, she could not do so. There was only a sensation of disquiet. Her reason refused to accept Mainwaring as easily as did her heart.

It was queer that Peggy disliked Mainwaring so thoroughly! Peggy was the sunny sort of girl who liked every one. She went through life



He put his arms about Anne and held her tight. She tried to jerk free. Angry tears gleamed in her eyes.

collecting friends as a botanist collects wild flowers. However, she made no secret of her dislike for Mainwaring. "I wish he'd come off his high horse just once," she said. "He's so high and mighty he reminds me of the Chrysler Building. Only you've got to look so far up that you get a crick in your neck! Wouldn't I adore seeing him laid low for once, though!"

"Is there anything else you need, Anne? May I help you unpack?" Anne started. She had gone so far afield in her imagination that she had forgotten where she was for the moment.

"No—no, thanks," she answered confusedly. "I—I'll manage, all right. Aunt Mer—that is, Miss Dawson."

"Aunt Merry," corrected the other smilingly.

"I'd like to call you that!" Anne beamed at her with real liking. "It's funny—I've heard that name before. Aunt Merry, I mean." She wrinkled her brows in the effort to remember.

Aunt Merry looked a trifle ill at ease. "It's a common enough nickname," she said quickly. "By the way, Anne, you're not our only guest."

"No?" Anne smiled at her. She unstrapped her suitcase and began putting things in the bureau drawers.

"Stephanie Glendening is here, too." Aunt Merry hesitated. "She lives in Los Angeles, and she comes to visit me rather often. She—she rather fancies Jared, I imagine."

Anne's eyebrows went up. "I see." She shoved a pile of silk underwear into the top drawer with unnecessary vigor, and turned to attack the bag which held her dresses. "Why didn't she get this job of—of doubling for the other Anne, then?"

"Plenty of reasons. Every one around here knows her, for one

thing. And then she—well, I guess I might as well be frank. Jared isn't so sure he likes her. But she's a very determined girl and a very beautiful one, and sometimes——"

"Seems to me my duties are mounting," laughed Anne. "Not only am I to save Jared's face before his fellow townspeople, but I'm to fight off a determined woman who's decided to put her own brand on Jared. So!" She shook out a scarlet evening dress and stared at it with speculative eyes before she hung it in the closet.

Aunt Merry's laugh rippled out. "There's still another guest, Jane Cullen. She lives in town, but she often comes out for a week-end with us. She's a dear. I know you'll like her."

Anne hung up her white sports suit; then she turned around. "For a man who just hates women, your Jared ought to be running a harem!" she said crossly. "Any one who can collect a blonde named Anne, a determined beauty who staggers along under the name of Stephanie, and a village belle called Jane—all at once—deserves a medal, I'd say!"

"Dinner will be ready in about an hour. Of course, we don't dress." Anne read a subtle reproach in Aunt Merry's gentle words, and flushed. Aunt Merry smiled at her again; then she went out, shutting the door. Anne opened her bag and got out a picture in a leather frame. It was a photograph of a man with predatory eyes, a firm-shut mouth with thin lips, and a weak chin, but it was the photograph of a good-looking man nevertheless.

"Oh, Mainwaring, why did I ever come?" gasped Anne. "Why did you let me? When I told you about it, you said you thought it would be a great lark. That was what actually made me come to a decision."

She sighed, and then kissed the pictured face.

After she had bathed and donned fresh underwear, Anne debated which dress she should put on. Her wardrobe was rather limited. One of the suitcases was full of books. The second hatbox was stuffed with papers. But Peggy had maintained that Anne ought to arrive with plenty of baggage, as it would make her entrance much more impressive. Peggy had lent her the extra hatbox and bag. Not until Anne had seen Jared look interestedly at them when he put them into the car had she remembered that Peggy's initials were on the baggage—not her own. Maybe Jared thought she had stolen the things—not that she cared a particle what he thought!

Anne put on her "hardy perennial." It was a turquoise-blue dress, and she called it that because it bobbed up serenely every spring, blossomed through the summer, and then died down in the autumn, year after year. That season it was especially attractive because she had added a snowy-white chiffon collar and cuffs. She looked like a placid Priscilla. To further that end, Anne parted her hair in the middle and drew it down severely on either side of her face. She brushed out the hint of a wave, and fastened each smooth lock behind her ears. Luckily her hair was just long enough for that. Never had Anne looked more demure. And when she appeared most demure, then was she most dangerous!

"Anne darling!" That was Jared, knocking at the door. "Are you ready? Dinner's on the table, and I've often told you how temperamental Panchita is about having every one right on time for meals."

Anne drew a deep breath. She wished Jared wouldn't call her "dar-

ling" in that thrilling, intimate tone which did something to her heart every time he said it. She didn't care, of course. Only—

She opened the door and came out. "Jiminy!" said Jared. He blinked. Anne's heart leaped with a sudden fierce joy at the admiration she saw mirrored in his eyes. She would humble this Jared!

"You certainly are one pretty girl!" went on Jared. There was something mocking in his voice. "But I'm wondering about the gay heart. Somehow you don't look very—very gay."

Anne looked demure. "I'm sorry. Then I'll have to cultivate a gay heart," she said.

"You can't. It's either something you have—or you haven't. It—Here comes Stephanie! Remember your rôle!"

Stephanie was tall and haughty. She came near and laid her hand on Jared's arm with a possessive gesture. "So this is your Anne!" she said, staring at her coldly. "Really, Jared, I'm surprised. I thought a Chicago girl would be—different."

"What did you expect?" snapped Anne. "A brace of knives at my belt and a couple of revolvers in each hand?"

Jared turned his laugh into a cough. "Anne's sort of sensitive about Chicago," he explained hastily. "So many people make jokes and try to—"

"Oh, don't misunderstand me," said Stephanie. "I've visited in Chicago a great deal. Which residential section do you prefer? I simply adore some of them."

Anne looked blank. This was something she hadn't expected. Her knowledge of Chicago was limited to an hour between trains on the way across the continent. She cudgeled her brain. What under the sun was

the name of a Chicago residential district?

As she hesitated, a girl came into the room. "Hello, Jared's Anne!" she said gayly. "I'm Jane Cullen. My, you're pretty!"

Anne blushed. "So—so are you," she stammered.

"A mutual admiration society?" murmured Stephanie.

"Sorry you don't belong," Jane grinned. She turned back to Anne. "How does it feel to be engaged to Jared? Girl, how we envy you! But let me warn you. Every woman who knows Jared even to speak to falls head over heels in love with him. It's part of his fatal charm."

Anne's eyes twinkled. Jared looked so uncomfortable.

"Do lay off, Jane!" he snapped. "You make me out a perfect boob."

"Or perhaps a perfect *Don Juan*?" cooed Stephanie.

"Maybe the two terms are synonymous." Anne gave them her demurest smile. Her glance met Jared's and locked. She tried to look her contempt. Never had she met a man she hated more. A queer little shivery feeling was flooding through her. She wondered what caused it. Not Jared's steady gaze, surely! She looked away hastily. The shivery feeling stopped.

"I'm starved," said Jane, in the pause which ensued. "Did any one mention anything about food?"

Silently, Anne followed the rest into the large dining room.

Jared pulled out her chair for her with elaborate concern. She was glad to sit down, for she was strangely trembling.

Almost immediately, Panchita waddled in with the soup. She was an enormous Mexican woman with three chins. Panchita set Stephanie's plate down with a bang that made the soup lap perilously near the

edges. She slid Jane's plate of soup on the table with a grunt. But when she came to Anne she frankly beamed. "Nice," she approved. "Ver' nice, pretty girl. You make good wife. I teach you to cook fine!" She waddled back to her kitchen.

Every one laughed. Jane said: "You're elected, Anne. If Panchita passes on you, you're solid with this family. That's the only reason Jared didn't want to marry me. Panchita said I was flighty! That ruined everything."

Stephanie stirred restlessly "You talk so much nonsense, Jane!" she reproved.

Jane giggled. "My only consolation is that much as Panchita looks down on me, she considers you—dog meat!"

Stephanie looked wistfully at Jared. Her glance seemed to say: "How much of this commonness do I have to endure for your sake?"

Anne suddenly decided that she disliked Stephanie Glendening very much, especially as she was almost sure that Jared had reached under the table and patted Stephanie's hand!

The rest of the meal went by without incident. Anne was surprised to find that she had a good appetite. By rights, the anomaly of her position should have worried her so that she could not eat. Instead, she felt a new zest in living.

"You two love birds want to be alone, I'm sure," said Aunt Merry, getting up briskly from the table. "So Stephanie and Jane and I will play three-handed bridge."

"Wonderful!" said Jane. "There's no game I like better. Plenty of chance to be a pirate!" She looked meaningly at Stephanie.

Stephanie raised her beautifully penciled eyebrows. "It's a game

without science," she said. "I prefer science."

Anne wasn't listening. Jared was bending over her. "There's a great big moon," he was saying. "Let's go riding till we find that moon. It might be interesting."

"I'll get my coat," said Anne calmly. How was Jared to know that her heart was pounding a mad tattoo against her ribs, and that she had to knot her fingers together so he wouldn't notice their trembling? The queer thing was that she hadn't the slightest idea why she was so perturbed. Perhaps it was because she was afraid of this Jared, with his auburn hair and his domineering manner of riding roughshod over everything and everybody.

"Don't put on a hat," counseled Jared softly. "I want to see your hair gleam in the moonlight. It looks like molten gold."

"How charming! I didn't know you were a poet, Jared." This was Stephanie. Her laugh was metallic.

"Nobody ever told me my hair was like molten gold," complained raven-haired Jane plaintively. "Let's get at this bridge. It'll help drown our sorrows."

Anne slipped into her beige-colored coat. Then she powdered her nose and put a tiny speck of rouge on her cheeks—not that they needed it. For some reason, they were glowing and hot. After that, she did something she didn't understand in the slightest. She put a drop of her favorite perfume on her quivering lips and another drop behind each small ear. Then she went out to Jared.

He put a possessive hand on her arm. "Jiminy!" he said. "This is sure one perfect night for love making!"

Anne's heart thudded twice as fast. "Moon on the desert—with a

sheik thrown in for good measure," she said almost calmly. "What more could a poor girl wish for?"

In silence they went into the yard and were greeted by the overjoyed dogs. In silence they got into the car, and Jared started the motor. In silence they drove across the moon-bathed desert. But all the time it was a silence that seemingly shrieked aloud, only Anne couldn't quite catch what it was saying. It was something just outside of her ken. The acrid odor of greasewood was in her nostrils. The sound of a distant cowbell sounded in her ears. A tall, grotesquely twisted Joshua cactus was silhouetted against the moonlit sky.

"This is lovely!" she said suddenly. "Lovely!"

"Think so?" Jared stepped on the accelerator. The battered little car leaped ahead as if to catch up with his mood. "I imagined you'd think it was pretty tame. Not like Broadway at night, for example."

"You've been to New York?"

"Yes, we cowboys get around a bit these days." His tone humiliated her.

"I didn't mean that," she said coldly.

Silence descended again like a cloak. They drove for a quarter of an hour or more. Then suddenly Jared stopped the car. Anne looked around. They were entirely alone. Only the cacti and the sand and the moon and the stars were there to see. She was terrified, yet somehow overjoyed. She turned toward Jared. In another moment, he would take her in those steel-like arms and crush her to him. He would kiss her trembling lips and her fluttering eyelids. He would murmur sweet words of love.

"Understand once and for all," said Jared gruffly, "I hate women!"

Anne gasped. "Wh-what?"

"I hate women! I trusted one and gave her my love and my heart. Her name was Anne and she had gold hair, too. And what did she do to return my love? She eloped with a sleek softy who could dance like nobody's business! Women are all the bunk. I wouldn't trust another girl if you paid me for it! So you can understand right now, if you're expecting any nonsense—get rid of that idea. This is strictly a business proposition."

"Oh!" said Anne. Before she knew what she was doing, her hand shot out and she slapped Jared across the face. She put plenty of force behind the blow, too.

Jared sat quite still. In the moonlight she could see that his eyes were twin points of fury. She was horribly frightened. What would he do now?

Suddenly Jared laughed. "Suits me," he said. "War it is!" Without another word, he turned the car around and began driving back toward the house.

Anne leaned back limply against the seat. "You—you might as well know right now that I love somebody else," she said. "So you see you needn't be a bit afraid that I'll join your admiration society. I'm engaged to a man who's a gentleman, not a crude cowboy!" she lied in sudden fury.

"Congratulations!" Jared bit off the word. "When we get back, you'd better go to your room by way of the window. It's a French window—full-length, you know. We don't want the others asking questions about our getting back so soon."

"Naturally not."

Neither spoke until they were driving into the yard again. Then Jared said: "You pack a mighty wallop for a girl!"

Anne didn't answer. She felt oddly shaken, as though she had come through some great crisis. She went into her room and fastened the window securely from the inside. Then she wrote two letters. The first was a passionate outpouring of loneliness. That was addressed to Mr. Mainwaring Barrows. The other was a line to Peggy:

This is a glorious spot and I love it. Aunt Merry's a perfect darling. Jared Dawson himself is crude, but quite amusing.

Perhaps it was the memory of how amusing Jared was that made her cry herself to sleep. And then again maybe it wasn't!

Early the next morning there was a tap at her window. She went quickly to answer. Jared surveyed her white sports suit with obvious admiration. "Didn't dream you'd be an early riser," he said. "But it was imperative that I get in a word before the rest rally around. We forgot something important. It was Stephanie who reminded me last night, after I got in. You haven't any engagement ring."

"So I haven't." Anne looked down at her slim white fingers. "Well, since I'm stepping into that other Anne's No. 3 slippers, why not use her discarded ring?"

"For the simple reason that she didn't discard it!" Jared's laugh was grim. "She kept the ring for a souvenir. It was quite a nice one, you see."

Anne hesitated, then she said something she had had no idea of saying five minutes before. "I'm sorry I slapped you last night. You have every right to think women are terrible."

He didn't seem to hear. "After breakfast we'll drive into town and

look over the rings in the local jewelry shop."

"But won't every one hear about the purchase?" said Anne uncertainly.

"Surely! But I'll think of something to tell them." He bowed rather formally and went away. Anne watched him striding across the courtyard, the dogs jumping and barking with delight at seeing him. The early-morning sun glinted on his bare head. His shirt was open at the throat. He was bronzed like a statue, a Greek god. Anne gave herself a little mental shake. What was the matter with her?

Just for the sustenance it would give her, she took out Mainwaring Barrows's picture and gazed at it a long time.

A soft rap at the door was a welcome diversion from the tangled by-paths into which her thoughts were leading her. The picture still in her hand, forgotten, she went to the door and flung it wide. Stephanie slipped into the room with an exaggerated air of caution, and closed the door behind her. Stephanie smiled lazily.

"I thought you and I should get better acquainted," she said. "You don't mind if I come in and sit down for a moment, do you?"

Since Stephanie was already in the room, in the midst of settling herself comfortably in the one easy-chair, Anne contented herself with nodding. Stephanie looked at Anne with calculating eyes.

"How much do you love Jared Dawson?" she snapped suddenly.

"Why—oh—I—" Anne was completely at a loss, so abrupt had been the onslaught.

"I thought so! You really don't care for him at all. You're just marrying him for his money."

"I didn't even know he had any money!" cried Anne.

Stephanie raised a sophisticated eyebrow. "Yes? Well, we'll let it go at that. But I wanted to tell you, my dear, that Jared lost very heavily in the stock-market crash last fall."

"You came in to tell me Jared is bankrupt—is that it?" Anne was keeping a firm grasp on her temper.

"I'm afraid so." Stephanie sighed. "By the way, what good shows are playing in Chicago just now?"

"I don't like the theater!" Anne was always at sea when Stephanie got on the subject of Chicago.

"That's queer. Jared said you were simply wild about shows." Stephanie took out a cigarette and lighted it with maddening deliberation.

"Jared Dawson doesn't know a thing about me!" cried Anne, goaded by Stephanie's very nonchalance. "I tell him anything that comes into my head—anything—and he believes it. All men are stupid, every one of them."

Stephanie got up lazily. "And so are a lot of women," she said. "Well, I must be running on. Breakfast will happen in about a moment. We've had a nice little chat. I feel I know you so much better!" With that parting shot, she went out of the room, leaving Anne wondering exactly what she had meant.

Breakfast went off smoothly. Then Jared and she set off for town in the now-familiar little car. "Stephanie let me know by devious means that you were mooning over the photograph of another man when she came in to see you this morning," said Jared after a time. "That's poor business. It doesn't fit in with our story. I'll have to ask you to put the picture away."

"I have." Anne chopped off the word. "It was the picture of my fiancé," she added, "the one I told



The next morning there was a tap at her window. "We forgot something important," said Jared. "You haven't any engagement ring."

you about last night. His name is Mainwaring Barrows."

"Does he know why you came to Arizona?" asked Jared, his eyes on the road.

"Naturally!"

"And he let you come? He must be a fine sort! I'd kill my girl if she so much as suggested such a thing!"

"Maybe that's the reason why your girl eloped with a softy who was a marvelous dancer," put in Anne quietly.

"What's that?" He turned to look at her. "That wasn't fair!" he flashed.

"And do you always fight so fair, Mr. Nobility?" For some perverse

reason Anne was determined to goad Jared into a fury.

He refused to accept her challenge. "I don't play fair at all nowadays. And I here and now warn you that I'll employ any nefarious methods I think necessary to gain my own ends. Is that understood?"

"Perfectly!" Anne's heart was thumping excitedly.

"Fine!" Suddenly Jared laughed aloud.

"What's so funny?" asked Anne suspiciously.

"I was just wondering if you called your fiancé 'Main' when you felt especially affectionate, or does that sound too much like a street or a telephone exchange?"

Anne's cheeks glowed. "I don't believe in nicknames," she said. "A good thing, isn't it? Because Jar might not sound so well for you!" Her eyes snapped.

"Second wallop!" Jared flinched. "Girl, you sure know how to call your shots!"

Neither spoke again until they reached town. They chugged up to the little jewelry store, sandwiched between the butcher shop and the Elite Dress Emporium. Anne followed Jared into the store.

"This is Miss Anne, Joe," said Jared to the proprietor. "My fiancée, you know. Well, Joe, she's been crying her eyes out over the fact that she lost her engagement ring. Got any decent-looking diamonds to take its place?"

Joe beamed at Anne. "You bet. Look at these!" He put a tray of rings on the counter.

While Anne hesitated, Jared's lean brown hand hovered over the tray and then came to rest on the most gorgeous ring of the lot—a square-cut emerald with small diamonds at the sides.

"How about this one?" he asked.

Joe's smile broadened. "The most expensive ring in the place!" he said. "It's a positive gem!"

Jared frowned at him. Then he turned to Anne. "Like it?" he asked. "Or would you prefer something else?"

"It's the sort of ring I've always dreamed about," said Anne wistfully. "But——"

"Let's see how it looks on your hand." Jared slipped the ring on her engagement finger. His hands weren't so steady. His touch was like fire to Anne.

"A perfect fit!" cried Jared. "Keep it on, dear." He turned to Joe. "Send the bill, will you?"

"Surest thing." Joe smirked. "Don't mind me, Jared. Go ahead and kiss her! I'll turn my back. I understand."

"Good for you, Joe!" Before Anne could guess his intent, Jared caught her close, and pressed his lips to hers in a kiss that made the universe spin. Anne tried to resist for a moment, then she went limp in his arms. He kissed her again. Then he freed her abruptly. Both were breathing rather fast. Somehow, they said good-by to Joe and went out and got into the car.

"I see now what you meant about not playing fair," said Anne. Tears misted her eyes. Sobs were tearing at her throat. But she wouldn't for the world have let Jared know how great was her agitation.

She jerked at the catch of her bag until it opened. "Here are two letters I want mailed," she said, taking them out and cramming them into Jared's hand. "Right away, if you please. And kindly send them air mail." She was staring straight ahead like an offended goddess, but she was quite sure the letter addressed to Mainwaring was on top.

Jared lingered. "I—I was a cad," he said humbly.

"I understand all that perfectly!" cut in Anne. "And now if you will please mail those letters?"

Jared muttered something deep down in his throat. He strode off. Anne wiped her eyes impatiently on her little wisp of a handkerchief. "I hate him!" she whispered to herself. Her lips kept on tingling from the marvel of his kiss. The huge emerald ring on her finger winked at her solemnly.

"This is going to be one nifty party!" said Jane. She was curled up on one end of the day bed, manicuring her finger nails. "The patio where we're to dance looks like something out of a storybook. There are Chinese lanterns and flowers galore and a stringed band from L. A. It must be nice to be as terribly rich as Jared."

"I thought he lost most of his money in the stock-market crash," said Anne brushing her hair.

"Not Jared!" Jane sighed. "It must be wonderful to be rich. I'm going to pick myself a rich husband one of these days."

"Do you care about Jared—really, I mean?" Anne waited almost breathlessly for her answer. Anne had become very fond of Jane in the week she had been at the ranch.

Jane shook her head. "I had a crush on him, that's all. There are plenty other fish in the sea. My heart's like one of these elastic bands—can be stretched to accommodate almost anybody!" She finished her nails, and stood up, putting the file and buffer on the bureau. "I'm going to breeze along to my own room and finish primping. You'd better be hurrying, yourself. The big affair is scheduled to start in about an hour from now."

"Where's Jared?" asked Anne abruptly. "I thought I heard his car leave a little while ago."

Jane hesitated. "Yes. He went down to the station to meet some guest who's coming from out-of-town."

Jane turned to go, then came back again. She said slowly: "Say, Anne, please don't be mad, but I can't keep still any longer. Don't you see that Stephanie's throwing herself at Jared's head every chance she gets? And he's human! Take to-night, for instance. You weren't around. You never are, it seems. Stephanie got Jared to take her with him all that nice long way to the station. She was dolled up for the party, too—a green dress, all slinky and appealing. I can't bear to see you get stung by a girl like Stephanie! Make some effort to hang onto Jared. He's worth it, I tell you. He's a prince." She went out, slamming the door.

Anne sat down. She opened a book. She told herself that she was going to sit quite calmly and read. She did for about five minutes. But the vision of Stephanie in a green clinging dress kept getting between Anne and the printed page. She shut the book with a bang. Confound that girl anyhow!

Anne began to dress. She put on the scarlet evening gown and outlined her lips with the same vivid shade. She let her hair curl to its heart's content. She looked at her reflection in the mirror—golden slippers, sheer golden stockings, scarlet dress, golden hair, wistful eyes. What was she looking so everlastingly wistful about? Everything was perfectly lovely. In a week she could go back to New York with two hundred dollars in her bag. That was quite a stake for a girl who had been absolutely broke.

Jared had been nice all week long. He hadn't kissed her again, hadn't tried to hold her in his arms, hadn't even wanted to be alone with her for a minute. Which was a great help to Anne's peace of mind. Of course it was!

She twisted the gleaming emerald around and around on her slender finger. She remembered the compelling lips that had pressed so tight against her own. Life was so complicated!

The whirl of the ancient car brought her to the door with the rest—Aunt Merry and Jane and Panchita. By the porch light she could see two people getting out. One was Stephanie, all glittering and twinkling in a sequin-covered gown; then a man. Anne peered. Her breath caught in her throat. She looked again. "Mainwaring!" she whispered.

He couldn't possibly have heard, but he looked up just the same. Quickly he crossed the intervening space and took both her hands in his. "Anne darling!"

Anne could only gasp.

"It was so dear of you to telegraph me to come to your party. I hopped a plane promptly—and here I am."

"Mrs. Dawson, may I present Mr. Barrows? And Miss Jane Cullen—Mr. Barrows." Anne's mind was whirling. What did he mean by a telegram? Why had he come? And how had she ever thought that Mainwaring was tall? Beside Jared, he looked like a pygmy. And his face was so pasty-white.

Jared said: "Come on, every one. We'll have a cocktail before the rest arrive. What do you say?"

"Marvelous!" Stephanie fluttered her eyelashes at Mainwaring. He responded to her lure promptly, as he always did to the command of

any pretty woman. They walked along together.

Anne caught Jared's arm. "Please," she whispered. "I want to see you alone for a moment."

"Of course. Aunt Merry can do the honors for a while."

Anne waited until the others were out of earshot. She and Jared went into the hall and closed the front door. Then she faced him. "How did Mainwaring happen to come here?" she demanded.

Jared grinned. "I sent for him!"

"You!"

"Yes. I telegraphed. Remember that day you gave me some letters to mail? Well, I tore up his letter and threw it in the garbage can. I told you I wasn't going to play fair! But I got his address first. I wired him to come immediately. I said that Jared Dawson was not behaving like a gentleman and that you needed Mainwaring's protection. I told him to arrive the night of the party, and that you wanted him to take you back to New York. I signed your name to the telegram."

"Oh," cried Anne. "Why did you do that? Were you so anxious to be rid of me?" Her hand was pressed against her heart as if to stop its aching. Jared turned away.

"This hasn't turned out so well, has it? I thought it time for the public turn-down I was to receive, so we could ring down the curtain on this farce. I—I—"

"But you were to turn me down—to save your face," said Anne, looking at him in bewilderment.

Jared's eyes flashed. "No—you turn me down! Of course. Say before them all that you prefer Mainwaring to me. Then you can go away immediately—to-morrow." He turned away.

Anne bit her lip until it hurt. "You hate me as much as that? You

can't even bear to have me around for another seven days?" She felt cold and miserable.

"I don't——" began Jared. But just then the doorbell rang and guests began trooping in, laughing and chattering. Every one had been bidden to the party at Jared Dawson's, whole families. Card tables were set in the dining room for those who did not care to dance. Aunt Merry was going to supervise the games for the children. Jane was herding the dancers out into the patio.

And before all those people, Jared expected her to jilt him!

She leaned against the wall, suddenly faint. She had remembered something else. She had told Jared she was engaged to Mainwaring. What if Mainwaring told the truth? That would be a horrible punishment for her impulsive lie.

Jared came over to her. He held out his hand. "Come, Anne. Jane wants us to start the dancing. No one wants to be first on the floor, and good music is going to waste."

Silently, Anne walked along with him.

As Jane had suggested, the patio was lovely. The house was built all around a center open space. Every room opened onto the open square with its red-and-black tiled floor. Chinese lanterns lighted the scene. Flowers and palms and ferns were everywhere. The moon and the stars and the sky were overhead. Romance was in the warm night air.

Jared took her into his arms and they began to dance. "You're like a bit of thistledown," he said after a while.

"You—don't dance so badly yourself," said Anne huskily. They dipped and glided and turned as one person. Anne felt like crying. The orchestra was playing a romantic

little tune, with love as the eternal theme.

"I—I'm not engaged to Mainwaring," said Anne abruptly. "I—I just said that. I don't know what made me."

"But you love him?" queried Jared gravely.

Anne hesitated. She thought about Jared and how he had always despised her. She remembered how anxious he was to have her go. With a sigh, she drew her pride close about her like a coat. "Of course," she said lightly. "Why not?"

Jared didn't reply. The dance went on and on. Anne wished it would never end. She wanted to feel Jared's strong arms about her always. She wanted to nestle in his embrace for the rest of her life.

And then the dance was over and another had begun, and Mainwaring was asking for the honor.

But Mainwaring didn't want to dance. He wanted to walk out under the stars. They walked through the living room and out the front door. Jared watched them go. There was an odd expression in his eyes.

Mainwaring was laughing. "So this Jared person didn't live up to his bargain, eh? And you had to telegraph for me to come and get you. Well, well! But you know you can't blame the man. You're a captivating witch, you know, Anne. I've missed you like anything. And how you can kiss!"

He put his hands on her shoulders and gave her a little shake before he stooped and laid his lips on hers.

Anne let him kiss her, but her lips remained passive and cold under his ardor. "What's gotten into you, Anne?" Mainwaring asked angrily. "You're acting like a marble statue."

"I didn't telegraph you," said Anne. "Jared did."

"What?" Mainwaring stepped back. "What do you mean?"

"I told him I was engaged to you," said Anne. "That's why he sent for you. He thought I—wanted you."

Mainwaring laughed uncertainly. "And that's been worrying you? Silly Anne! We'll be married some day, of course. I've always been intending to ask you."

There—he had said it. He had asked her to marry him. He had said those magic words she had been waiting so long for him to utter. And she didn't care a snap! She suddenly realized that she wouldn't marry Mainwaring under any consideration. She wasn't in love with him. She didn't even like him!

"I missed you," Mainwaring was saying, oblivious to Anne's inner turmoil. "I missed you tremendously. By the way, who was that captivatingly lovely woman Dawson had with him in the car when we came from the station?"

"I suppose you mean Stephanie Glendenning," said Anne.

"Fascinating!" commented Mainwaring. "I was intrigued."

"Then go and get engaged to her," said Anne crossly. "She's just your sort. As for me, I wouldn't marry you on a bet!"

"Why, I believe you're jealous, Anne!" Mainwaring beamed at her delightedly. Then he seized her tightly in his arms and began kissing her. They were quick, hard kisses that hurt her. Anne tried to free herself. Somehow all the fire had gone out of Mainwaring's kisses so far as she was concerned. She didn't want them. She hated them! Wildly she struggled, but Mainwaring only laughed and held her closer. "You little spitfire!" he said fondly. Then he kissed her some more.

"Jared!" screamed Anne. "Jared!" She hadn't any idea why she

shrieked his name. She didn't know he was anywhere about. But he abruptly appeared out of the darkness of the night.

"Let go of Anne, you!" he snapped. His tones were menacing.

Mainwaring released Anne with an abruptness that almost sent her sprawling. "Beg pardon," he said. "I don't quite get this."

"Don't you?" said Jared grimly. "Listen, then! I had you come out here so Anne could find out whether she really liked you. Evidently she doesn't. So you'd better go into the house and dance with some one else. Otherwise, I'm liable to forget that I'm your host and knock you down! Which wouldn't be polite at all."

Mainwaring turned to Anne. "Do you ask me to go?"

"Yes. Yes! Go!" Her heart was thudding so that it seemingly shook her whole being. But she wasn't thinking of Mainwaring.

"There are so many women in the world!" Mainwaring laughed shortly. "After all, one woman lost is—just one!" He shrugged and made his way toward the house.

The orchestra was playing a dreamy waltz. A warm little breeze swept over the desert, rumpling Anne's hair and stirring the fragile draperies of her dress.

"This whole affair was a frame-up," said Jared gruffly. "I've got to tell you. I can't keep on deceiving you any longer. Ross Brown is my cousin, you see. Aunt Merry is his Aunt Merry, too!"

"Ross Brown. Not the Ross who's engaged to marry my chum, Peggy!"

"Exactly. Do you begin to see? Peggy didn't think Mainwaring was good enough for you. She thought he was a cad. So she appealed to Ross to help her get you away from Mainwaring."

"Then you didn't put an ad in any

newspaper?" asked Anne in a small voice.

"Oh, yes. Aunt Merry and I wrote it together. We tore up all the other replies. Peggy promised to see that you got the advertisement. I guess she did."

"And there wasn't any Chicago girl?"

"There certainly was. All that was perfectly true!" Jared's voice sounded grim. "I didn't want to help Peggy and Ross break up your love affair. I didn't give a snap about you. But Aunt Merry talked me into it. I decided that if you were fool enough to come, I'd use you to save my own face—about the other Anne." He sighed. "It was a—crazy stunt from beginning to end."

"Yes," said Anne slowly. "It was. And now that I understand thoroughly about everything, I must ask you to drive me to town. I don't care to stay under your roof another night." That horrible pain must be her heart breaking, she told herself. No other suffering could be as horrible as that of a breaking heart.

Jared caught her hand close in his and held it tight. "I love you. I've always loved you, since the beginning of time, I guess. Only I was

afraid to give in to love after—after that other Anne, the girl who wasn't a bit like you, my sweet."

Anne's heart stopped aching and began to pound so that she vibrated to its mad rhythm. "I—I could change my name," she whispered breathlessly. "You could call me—oh, anything. Because you see, I—I love you, Jared!"

Her eyes were luminous. Her breath fluttered.

"Anne! Anne dearest!" His fingers were caressing her firm little chin, finding their way beneath to the little hollow in her throat. "Change your name? Of course you can! My darling, you can change your last name—to mine!" His lips found hers. His hands cupped about her face. He laid his cheek against hers in a gesture at once gentle and compelling.

Anne laughed aloud, she was so happy. "My heart is gay!" she cried joyously. "Oh, I didn't know that happiness could be like this!" She raised her lips for another kiss.

"Your heart's all mine, my sweet, and all my life I'll keep it so." The moon enveloped them in its eerie light. The warm breeze fanned their faces. The orchestra went on playing a waltz of love.



LOVE'S LANGUAGE

WHEN you smile, in my heart
Thoughts unspoken glow and start,
Love's sweet potent mystery
Floods in my soul with ecstasy,
And you seem to sense my rapture
As one small, white hand I capture,
For your lips give ardently
My deep kisses back to me.

HELEN K. ROBERTS.



The Way to a Man's Heart

By
Dorothy Ainsworth

TIRES rasped on the graveled road as a disreputable-looking roadster skidded to a violent stop. The driver, a young man with wind-disheveled hair, ignoring the doors of the car, swung long legs over its side. In three great steps he covered the distance back to a neatly painted sign. Then grinning boyishly, he let out another notch in his stride, and walked through a trellised gate into a path that led to a

very old house. There was a well-kept miniature golf course on the right of the path, but it was deserted, and the half dozen tables set about the wide veranda were empty, too. A tantalizing aroma filled the air. He sniffed appreciatively, and pulled a heavy brass knocker.

After a little wait the door was opened by a girl in a sleeveless pink dress. Her cheeks were flushed, and there was a smudge of flour on the

right side of her nose. Merry eyes, blue as the wings of a tropical butterfly, gazed at him inquiringly.

The young man made a belated effort to smooth his light, sun-bleached hair.

"Your sign says that you have warm doughnuts for sale," he began hopefully. "Could I get a cup of coffee too?"

She nodded and smiled.

"It's cooler on the side porch," she said. "You'd better take one of the tables there. Do you like your doughnuts sugared or plain?"

"Sugared," he answered promptly, with a small boy's greediness in his voice. "And maybe I'd better get as close as I can to the base of supply. I'd say offhand that I'll probably eat a gross of them."

"I—I wonder if you'd let me wash up a bit in the kitchen," he added. "I've driven about three hundred some odd miles to-day, and I'm pretty dirty."

The girl, Penelope Norris, laughed outright.

"It might be a good idea for you to eat in the kitchen too," she said. "We keep the bicarbonate of soda there. The doughnuts are awfully good, if I do say so myself, but you're likely to need it if you eat as many as you threaten to."

He followed her through a cool, high-ceilinged hallway into a large square kitchen. There were dotted-swiss curtains, crisp and ruffy at the windows, and open cupboards painted jonquil-yellow. A row of blue plates made a broken line of contrasting color. And everywhere was the distracting fragrance of freshly made doughnuts.

"Are you stopping in Linwood or just driving through?" Penny inquired politely.

"Staying for a while," he said. "A sort of prolonged vacation."

Penny's dark, smooth head bent busily over the stove. He was nice-looking, she thought; not too handsome. She liked the twinkle in his gray eyes, the smile that slanted his mouth up a bit at the corner. He was lean and tall and deeply tanned.

"Man, oh, man, what doughnuts!" he sighed. "Why aren't the natives forming in squads and platoons outside your door, just begging for them?"

Penny made a wry little face.

"Every one who could walk or borrow a crutch is down at the depot. Mr. Bancroft, the richest man in Linwood, died a few months ago while he was traveling in the Orient, and his heir is expected this afternoon. He's going to do a lot for the town—build a library, a new wing on the hospital, and I don't know what all. There's a band down to meet his train, and a committee of the leading citizens. He's to be presented with a key to the city, too. You know, the usual fuss. There'll be speeches and things."

"Speeches—a band! Egypt's queen!"

She refilled the plate with doughnuts. He eyed them longingly, but pushed back his chair from the table and glanced at his watch.

"I just happened to think of a long-distance call that will have to be put through," he said hurriedly. "In the morning I'll take on the doughnuts for another round and the miniature golf course, too."

His nice gray eyes smiled into hers.

"The crowd usually starts coming about eleven," Penny said, and then blushed hotly because of the way it sounded.

"I'll be around not later than eight," he answered. "Crowds cramp my style."

From a front window, she watched

him swing down the path to the highway, watched him kick a rear tire of the little roadster to test it, saw him glance back toward the house. When the car and its driver were out of sight, Penny rang up the money in a businesslike cash register.

"Idiot!" she said fiercely to herself "It was the doughnuts he liked, not you."

She was glad that she had sent Annie into Linwood instead of going herself to see the new arrival, to hear the speeches. Annie had protested half-heartedly, but Penny knew that she was dying to go.

She couldn't pay Annie much money for working for her. And it was tiresome, living on the outskirts of town. Penny knew it, but there wasn't much that she could do about it.

Two years before, she had lived in the largest house in Linwood and Fran, her sister, was studying voice in New York, laying plans for an operatic debut in Milan. Annie had been only one of a number of servants. There had been a summer home in the mountains, and Southern cruises in the winter. But that was before her father was caught in the stock-market crash before he had taken the easiest way out of his difficulties, leaving her and Fran alone in the world.

It had been unbelievable good luck when Emil Leur had offered to continue teaching Fran in exchange for her services in his office. But even at that, it cost a great deal. There was the fare to New York, living expenses, and, since it was Fran, pretty clothes too. Available funds just could not be stretched that far, and Penny had hit upon the idea of renting the old Graham place and installing a miniature golf course. Out of that had

grown the light-lunch idea, and under Annie's tutorship, the venture had proven a success.

It was quite the thing to drive out to Penny Norris's to play a few rounds of peewee golf, to eat her delicious sandwiches and salads. Of course, Penny had to give up all of her own good times, and when one is twenty and pretty it hurts. There was no denying that.

Penny piled the fresh doughnuts in a stone crock, poured the frying fat into a glass jar, and washed the dishes used by the gray-eyed stranger.

She wondered what his name was. He had acted as though—well, as though he liked her. Penny sighed happily, and pushed back the little curling tendrils of hair that clung to her warm forehead. So many of the boys she had gone around with formerly had proved to be fair-weather friends; they were rushing other girls now who drove their own cars, who wore smart-looking clothes. It was nice to be liked for herself—or her cooking, Penny added with a smile, remembering the incredible number of doughnuts he had stowed away.

She was sitting on the veranda steps looking at the sun-splashed hills, and watching fluffy little white clouds drift lazily across the summer sky when Annie came back from town.

"Well, did the band all get off on the same foot, and did Mr. Britts get through his speech without developing engine trouble?" Penny inquired. "Remember, I want full details!"

"The heir didn't come, Miss Penny," Annie panted, fanning herself with her hat. Annie was fat, gray-haired, and adoring. "The band and the committee and about a hundred people were there. You'd

have thought he could have wired that he wasn't coming, now wouldn't you?"

Penny cupped her small pointed chin in the palm of one hand.

"But it was so silly, every one just jumping at the idea that he was coming by train," she said. "When the committee wrote to find out when he was arriving he just said to-day, and because the 3:25 is the only train through here from the East they jump at conclusions. He might be flying or driving."

"I saw a big crowd around the *News* office when I was comin' home," Annie related. "There was a telegram signed A. A. Frisbee pasted on the bulletin board, and it said he had been detained, but his representative would arrive to-morrow on the 3:25. Well, I for one ain't goin' to stand in that sun to get a look at him."

The next morning Penny hoped Annie would not notice that she was wearing her yellow linen dress. The yellow linen was usually kept for special occasions. Penny ran a wet comb through her hair so that it would curl a little about her face. Then a trifle breathlessly she skipped downstairs.

It was not quite eight o'clock when a little roadster stopped smartly before the house. It had been washed and polished, but that only served to intensify its battle-scarred exterior.

The driver was hatless, and his hair, defying an obviously applied wet brush, showed an unsubdued wave. His shoes, trousers, and shirt were immaculately white, his necktie a cerulean blue.

"Hello," he greeted Penny. "I'm so hungry I had to pin a tuck in my appetite."

Quite matter-of-factly, he followed her into the kitchen again.

"Let's cut out the ceremony," he said. "My name is Tony Frick. What's yours?"

"Penelope Norris—Penny for short." She poured a cup of coffee, and set a plate of sugared doughnuts before him.

"Penny," he repeated reflectively. "Penny. That's a cute name. It—it sort of fits you."

"Little and no-account?" she asked pertly.

"Nope," grinned Tony, but he did not commit himself.

Four times during the morning he bought golf tickets, and three times coffee and doughnuts.

"Do you really think you should eat so many of them?" Penny inquired anxiously.

"I told you I was liable to eat a gross," he reminded her.

There wasn't much time for little chats after eleven o'clock. Half a dozen cars of young people came to play the miniature course. Penny was kept busy selling tickets, and serving the sandwiches and frosty fruit drinks she and Annie made.

By three o'clock the course and the tables were deserted. Every one went back to Linwood to meet the 3:25 train that was bringing the Bancroft heir's representative. Tony promptly presented himself at the kitchen door.

"Not another doughnut," Penny said firmly. "If you're really hungry I'll fix you a tomato sandwich instead."

"All right," he replied meekly, settling himself comfortably in a chair. "Tell me, how does it happen you aren't interested in the Bancroft heir?"

"But I am," Penny asserted, spreading mayonnaise with a lavish hand. "I'm crazy to see him, and prepared to love him on sight. It's only his representative who's com-

ing to-day. When A. A. Frisbee, the gold-plated heir, shows up I'm going to try to snare him for a husband along with the rest of the girls."

"No!" said Tony in alarm.

Penny nodded her head.

"I probably won't get even a look-in on his brand-new millions, but given the chance I'd certainly capitalize on it."

Penny paused a moment.

"I suppose you're shocked," she added defiantly. "Well, if you were



"When the gold-plated heir shows up, I'm going to try to snare him for a husband along with the rest of the girls."

as poor as I am you'd know what I mean."

Tony measured three spoonfuls of sugar into his coffee before he answered.

"I know what it is to be poor. I've never been anything but that all of my life," he said.

He left a little later. Penny watching behind a curtain saw him climb into the little car without glancing back, and abruptly the sun seemed to shine less brightly, and she was conscious of being very tired.

She wiped dishes for Annie, and then went out to sit on the veranda steps. There wouldn't be any business now until after dinner. She supposed she should bring out her pen and pad and write to Fran. Fran's last letter worried her. Her music had been going all right, she reported, but Leur was an old slave driver about her practicing. What was the use of being in New York, Fran wanted to know, if you couldn't go places and have a little fun? And she really needed a new dinner dress. Could darling old Penny come across with enough for an adorable green chiffon she just had to have?

Penny, thinking of all the sharp corners she was cutting as it was, sighed unhappily. Fran was only a year younger than she was. Penny knew what it meant to want pretty things, but she hadn't been able to buy anything for herself in months. When her house dresses looked faded, Annie dyed them. Green chiffon!

She was writing to Fran when a car drove up. For just a minute she thought it might be Tony again. But it was Irene Britts. She parked her smart roadster carefully, and walked leisurely up the path to the house. Tall, very fair, very sure of

herself, she was exquisitely groomed, and her cool, insolent green eyes made Penny conscious of her own crumpled linen dress.

"Hello, darling," she greeted Penny. The "darling" didn't mean anything. There had been a time when Penny had thought it had, when she had counted Irene her best friend.

"Hello," Penny returned. "That Bancroft heir certainly played me a dirty trick, taking away my trade two afternoons. What does his ambassador look like?"

Irene sank down on the step beside her.

"I can't stay but a minute," she said rather importantly. "We're having him to dinner to-night. I ran out to buy some of your mayonnaise."

"Oh, tell me about him," Penny coaxed eagerly. "Is he very good-looking? Is he young?"

"He's both," the other answered. "If the heir is only half as wonderful, I'll be satisfied. I didn't have a chance to talk to him because the committee were doing their stuff, but I will to-night." She ran slim white fingers through a string of pearls she was wearing. Penny surreptitiously hid her own roughened hands behind her.

"I suppose there'll be lots of parties for him," she said wistfully.

"There's another awfully good-looking fellow in town," Irene remarked irrelevantly. "I saw him last night in front of the Court Hotel, and coming out here just now I had a flat tire on the road, and he fixed it for me."

Penny's heart beat faster with quick premonition.

"Was he driving a battered-looking green roadster?" she inquired.

"Why, yes," answered Irene in surprise. "A green roadster with a

New York license. How did you know? Who is he?"

"His name is Tony Frick, and he's a world's champion," Penny said, her blue eyes mischievous.

"Champion of what?" the other demanded.

"Doughnut eater," Penny giggled. "He gets his breakfasts here."

Irene shrugged. "He drives a terribly tacky-looking car," she commented. "I'd better get that salad dressing now, Penny."

Irene was such a snob, Penny thought resentfully as she filled a glass jar. Money, appearances, background counted so tremendously with her.

"What's the new man's name?" she asked. "I mean the first-aider to the millions."

"Jack Marsh. I'll bring him out here to-morrow so you can see him," Irene said. "I have a new sports dress I want to wear, and it's too warm for tennis or regular golf."

Quite a few drove out during the evening to play the tiny course. All of the girls made a point of telling Penny how wonderful-looking the Bancroft representative was.

Penny was tired when she crept into bed, but sleep would not come. She tried counting sheep, but time and again she had to start over because her thoughts trailed off to gray eyes that were warm and friendly. She gave only a passing thought to Jack Marsh.

"Would you be interested, madam, in some left-footed shoe strings?" a falsetto voice inquired the next morning. Penny jumped, and all but dropped a peach she was slicing. In the open kitchen doorway stood Tony.

"I'm hungry," he said plaintively. "I'm so hungry, my tummy's leaning against the old backbone. It

needs the staff of life—toasted, with plenty of raspberry jam on it."

Penny laughed helplessly, and unlocked the screen door.

"The doughnuts are all gone," she said.

"No!" exclaimed Tony, sinking into the nearest kitchen chair.

"Well, give me about a quart of coffee, black and plenty strong."

"Sounds like the morning after a late night."

"Not the kind you mean," Tony said virtuously. "I worked late last night. On figures, you know, and I never could count after I ran short of fingers."

"I thought this was your vacation," she said, cutting the bread deftly.

"I was working on a problem in high finance," Tony explained, looking critically at his nails.

"I have those problems too," Penny laughed. "Generally around the first of the month."

There was a long friendly silence while Tony ate his breakfast. Then it was abruptly broken. A car honked impatiently, insistently.

"Sounds like a customer who's anxious to part with his money," Tony remarked.

"It's Irene Britts," Penny said, a trifle grimly. "I know her horn. I'll go see what she wants."

She knew all right: Irene had come to dazzle the eyes of the good-looking young man who had fixed her tire—Tony. Annie came into the kitchen just then, and young Frick finished hurriedly.

Just as Penny had surmised, she found Irene on the veranda steps, the bright morning's sun making a nimbus of her soft yellow hair. Penny knew the effects Irene went in for.

"Good morning, darling," Irene drawled, and then she opened her

eyes wide in well-simulated surprise. "Why, this is the nice man I was telling you about, Penny. The one who fixed my tire yesterday."

"Yes, I remember," Penny said dryly. "But in case you didn't get as far as names, he's Tony Frick."

"And I'm Irene Britts." She extended a soft white hand to him. "It was perfectly sweet of you to rescue me yesterday."

She flattered him with her eyes.

"I thought you were bringing out the Bancroft deputy for me to look over," Penny put in hastily.

"Oh, he had some business to attend to this morning. They're going to start work on the library in a couple of weeks. I'm to pick him up at the Court Hotel around twelve o'clock. We're having lunch together. We might drive back here."



Irene gave a little shriek of amusement. "You haven't a chance! Why, it will take an expert to land an heir. All you can do is cook."

"How about a few rounds of golf with me?" Tony interposed. "I'll take half a yard of pink tickets, Penny, and half a yard of the blue."

The pink ones were for mornings when the rate was twenty-five cents a game; the blue for afternoon and evening when it was thirty-five.

"Goodness!" exclaimed Irene. "You must intend to spend your vacation out here."

"I do," grinned Tony, "with time out for sleep."

"Why, you'll be bored to death!" Irene remarked. "I see where I'll have to take you in hand."

Penny stood in the doorway for a minute, and watched them walk away. What possible difference could it make to her if Irene annexed Tony?—she asked herself. But she turned slowly toward the kitchen.

"That Britts girl always knows when there's a good-lookin' man in town, and where to find him," Annie commented. "She makes me sick rollin' her eyes and carryin' on the way she does."

"The men seem to like it," Penny answered quietly. "And she brings us lots of business."

"Humph!" Annie snorted. "She just trots them out here to show off before you, Miss Penny."

It was true. Irene did like to flaunt her conquests. And she liked to repeat to Penny the pitying things people said about her, making a great show of her own friendship. Penny knew, and wondered why Irene could possibly want to hurt another in that way.

It was Tony who introduced Jack Marsh to Penny. Irene had lunch with the two men, selecting a table where the other diners must pass her, coming and going.

The much-heralded man was dark, with clean-cut features. Penny

guessed him to be about a year older than Tony—twenty-five or six. His clothes were well-tailored, and there was an almost professional air about him. He paid the check for the three of them, and left a generous tip. Penny flushed uncomfortably when she found it; she couldn't accustom herself to taking them.

In his informal manner, Tony brought young Marsh to the kitchen to meet her.

"I'm bringing him back stage to meet the leading lady," Tony explained. "We both agree we'll have to let out a few seams if we have many lunches like the one this noon."

"I've been hearing things about your doughnuts, too," Jack said. "Frick maintains you even use a superior brand of holes!"

"Oh, here you are!" Irene called sharply. "It's nearly two o'clock, Jack, and you said you had an appointment with dad. I'll drive you in to Linwood."

After they had gone, Tony said: "Let me wipe those dishes. You sit here and boss the job."

"You'll get spots on those white pants of yours," Annie pointed out. "I'll just tie one of these aprons on you, Mister Tony."

He pirouetted a few steps, holding the pink-and-white checkered apron in one hand, and flourishing a towel in the other.

"*Ta-da, dee-dee-dum-dum,*" he sang. "I bet you swing a mean dish rag, Annie, but here's the boy who can keep up with you."

Penny relaxed in a chair with a tired little sigh. A laugh caught in her throat. He was a dear. He didn't seem to mind that Irene had gone with Jack, yet it might be only protective coloration, camouflage on his part.

She didn't blame men for liking

Irene. Irene had such a pretty face, such smart clothes. Penny glanced down at her own pink organdie that was two years old. Well, Irene was welcome to Tony; when Penny fell in love, it would be with somebody rich. She didn't ask herself why she associated the thought of love with Tony—she abruptly shied at the connection.

Jack Marsh came out with Tony the next morning for breakfast. But instead of staying to play a few rounds of peewee golf, they left immediately afterward. When she arrived a little later, Irene was furious that she had missed them.

She was dressed in white with a narrow green leather belt and green-trimmed sports shoes. Her hair lay in beautiful, burnished waves.

"Did the boys say they'd meet you here?" Penny inquired innocently.

"No, but I particularly wanted to see them this morning. I'm planning to give a dance at the Mayfair Club, and I wanted to talk it over with them."

"Oh," said Penny in a faint voice. She had given parties there, too. For just a moment she closed her eyes against the remembrance of those times.

"There's something I wanted to ask you, too," Irene went on. "Do you think that Tony is—well, my sort? You know a girl has to be particular. He has nice manners and all that, but that—that frightful old car of his!"

She floundered a bit under Penny's scornful eyes.

"Tony Frick is a prince," Penny defended warmly. "I think he's the nicest man I've met in ages."

"Falling for him, darling?" Irene inquired languidly. "I had an idea you were."

"No," answered Penny quickly—too quickly.

Irene inspected the toe of one trim slipper.

"Jack tells me Allan Frisbee is arriving on the sixteenth. That's why I'm planning my dance for that night. I want to be the first to entertain him."

"Maybe he won't show up this time either," Penny suggested.

"He'll have to," Irene said confidently. "They're breaking ground for the new library that day, and he has to be here to turn the first shovel of dirt or something."

"I'm dying to see him," Penny said, hugging her knees. "I'm dying to start work on him myself."

Irene gave a little shriek of amusement.

"You haven't a chance! Why, it will take an expert to land millions. All you can do is cook."

Penny glanced at her wrist watch, and sprang to her feet.

"After all," she remarked, "the way to a man's heart is via his stomach. I've got to get busy now. Are you staying or running back to town?"

"I guess I'll go home," Irene decided. "If the boys show up, tell them to phone me."

All thought of Allan Frisbee, Irene's party, or even Tony was driven from Penny's mind when she reached the kitchen. Annie had cut her wrist badly on a broken jelly glass, and was making a futile effort to stop the flow of blood.

Penny improvised a rude tourniquet with a piece of clean linen and the wooden handle of a fork. Tony found her ten minutes later, trying with shaking fingers, to hold the bandage tight, trying to fight off faintness at the sight of the blood. She stared at him with frightened eyes.

"A good job, Penny," he said. "Here, let me manage that for you. You go phone for a doctor."

Doctor Beck thought Annie should be in a hospital for a few days. Penny knew what he meant; there was the danger of infection. She flew upstairs to pack a small bag of Annie's things.

"Don't worry. Penny and I will manage," Tony whispered to the older woman. She tried to smile through lips twisted with pain.

"I'm to be cook while Annie's laid up," he announced to Penny. "Now lead me to that pink apron!"

There was the usual rush of customers near eleven o'clock. While Penny stuffed tomatoes with shrimp salad and pears with cream cheese, Tony opened bottles of olives and sliced great piles of bread for sandwiches. He even attempted to arrange fresh-cut garden flowers for the centerpieces on the tables, but they were pretty awful, and Penny had to do them over.

Tony was serving a party of four when Irene and Jack arrived.

"When you get through butling, come over and join us," Irene called to him. "And please make it snappy. I didn't have any breakfast and I'm starving."

"Sorry, I can't," young Frick answered cheerfully. "I'm working here now."

Penny saw Irene stiffen, saw her smile become glacial.

"It takes experience to handle a tray like that. Where did you acquire it?"

"Waiting on table for four years. I worked my way through college, you know."

Irene's laugh was brittle, cutting. "How interesting!" she drawled, deliberately turning her back.

"The snob! The contemptible little snob!" Penny stormed to her-

self. She was filled with a primitive longing to slap the other girl's pretty face, and she wanted to pat Tony's shoulder, to tell him how splendid she thought him. As if work were anything to be ashamed of!

After the midday rush, Tony washed dishes efficiently, and then took charge of selling tickets. As often as possible, he dashed back to report to Penny, and when he smiled into her eyes she forgot that her feet were tired, that her shoulders were stiff with weariness.

He even prepared supper for the two of them. He wasn't a very good cook; the scrambled eggs were scorched, and the bacon burned, but Penny loved every bit of it. Tony beamed proudly.

After it was too dark for people to see to play on the miniature course after every one had gone, she and Tony sat on the veranda steps. A great moon silvered the world, and the stars seemed very near to Penny when she raised her face to feel the cool, fragrance-laden breeze. Tony sprawled beside her.

Somehow, although it usually hurt almost unbearably even to think about it, Penny found herself telling him of life as she had lived it until two years before, about Fran, about the green chiffon dress that must be managed. Tony listened sympathetically, and Penny felt that in some unaccountable manner she had shifted part of her burden to his broad shoulders.

At ten o'clock Tony phoned the hospital again, and learned that Annie was resting comfortably. Then he said good night.

"Don't worry about being alone here."

"Poof! I won't be afraid," said Penny, but not very convincingly.

"You see," continued Tony, "I'll be sleeping in the roadster."



"Tony!" said Penny weakly. "Why Tony—imagine me—the wife of a millionaire!"

It didn't do a particle of good to argue against it, no more than it did in the days that followed when Penny protested against the long hours he put in working for her. Tony declared his remuneration was in just being there.

Sometimes Penny felt overwhelmingly shy when he looked at her; almost, it seemed that he must read in her eyes the words to the beautiful song that her heart sang constantly.

"Jack says Allan Frisbee will defi-

nately be here the sixteenth," Irene announced. "He's driving, but he'll be here in time for the ceremony of breaking ground for the new library. I can hardly wait to meet the paragon. Jack simply raves about him."

"I've lost all interest in him," Penny said. "Mr. Allan Frisbee and his millions mean nothing in my young life. I'm so busy these days that a new man in town means just another hungry mouth. I fix mountains of food, and it simply melts away."

"You were pretty crazy to meet the Bancroft heir a little while ago. Sure you aren't a trifle gaga over that Frick fellow?" Irene inquired. "For Heaven's sake, snap out of it if you are. Imagine a man who practically boasts of having waited on table to work his way through college!"

"You'll have to excuse me," Penny said briskly. "I've got work to do."

She didn't mind not being invited to Irene's party at the Mayfair. Tony wouldn't be there either, and any place he wasn't was a barren spot, Penny found. She loved their evenings together on the veranda steps, magic evenings saturated with the sweetness of flowers, drenched in moonlight, with Annie clumping about the kitchen at work, her arm in a sling.

"Penny!" said Tony on one of those nights. "Penny darling, I love you."

His voice was husky, unsteady. A little awkwardly, he carried one of her hands to his lips, and Penny felt electrified with a wild, sweet ecstasy. Then she was in his arms, with his kisses on her lips—and hers on his.

Clinging to him, her cheek pressed hard against his face, Penny sang the words of the song that had been

living in her heart: "Oh, Tony, I love you. I love you!"

He drew a long, exultant sigh.

"And loving me, you'll marry me, Penny?"

"Yes, dearest, yes!" The words were three little golden beads on the thread of a whisper.

"When, dear?" Tony demanded. "When, Penny?"

His lips brushed softly across her cheeks, her throat.

"I don't know." She lifted eyes that were suddenly troubled. "I—I don't know," she repeated. "There's my sister, Fran. She has a beautiful voice, and I'll have to keep on helping her. It—it doesn't seem right to make you share the burden of that."

"Every firm has its liabilities," Tony answered her whimsically. "Fran's musical education will be ours. But think of the assets, sweetheart! Oh, Penny, Penny, let's be married to-morrow!"

She laid a little ladder of kisses from his chin to his forehead.

"Why not be practical?" she said. "Most of our customers will be at Irene's party Friday night. There won't be much trade. We could be married then."

The hour for the ceremony at the site of the new library was set for two-thirty the afternoon of the sixteenth. Every one was hoping young Frisbee would get there. Annie insisted that Penny go, and finally Penny said that she would. Tony drove her to Linwood.

A great many people called greetings to Penny. Jack Marsh waved his hand, and then Irene spoiled everything by cutting Tony dead! Penny could scarcely believe her eyes. But it had been done deliberately, coldly. Penny's soft little chin quivered, but she tilted it, and squeezed Tony's arm.

Mr. Britts made a long rambling speech. People's necks began to crane uneasily; it looked as though the Bancroft heir would not be arriving in time.

Then Jack Marsh stepped beside Mr. Britts.

"It is my very great pleasure to present Mr. Frisbee," he said briefly.

With incredulous eyes, Penny, Irene, the other Linwood inhabitants watched Tony thread his way through the crowd.

"Hello, folks," he began informally. "I'm not going to talk long—I'm not even going to tell a funny story, although I know a good one."

Ever so casually his eyes flicked the scarlet face of Irene Britts.

"I dropped into Linwood a couple of weeks ago to look things over quietly. I just want you to know that I like the town, and I like the people. You're real folks! Won't you come to me with your suggestions for what Linwood really needs most?"

"Not now," he added hastily, his eyes telegraphing frantically to Penny to wait. "Not now, please—I've got to get a marriage license before the bureau closes!"

Some one handed him a spade, and Tony drove it into the ground, loosened the soil, and handed the shovel back again. The band began to play; hands slapped him on the back; people talked excitedly, but he walked directly to Penny, his love in his eyes for the whole world to see.

"Tony!" said Penny weakly. "Why Tony—imagine me—the wife of a millionaire! And your name isn't Tony Frick!"

"Allan Anthony Frisbee," he grinned. "Remember tipping me off

to the crowd that was waiting for me at the depot that first day I met you? Well, Tony Frick was born right then. But don't you suppose you could love Tony Frisbee the same as you love Tony Frick?"

"I might," Penny answered, climbing in beside him in the roadster, her lips tender and provocative.

"I had to gallop into town and get hold of Jack on long distance. He's an attorney, but he's so rich he only plays at working. I met him at school—in fact, I waited on his table for two years. Jack's a prince, and he said he'd hop up here from New York, and hold the fort for me while I looked around. Staying at the same hotel the way we were gave us plenty of time to talk things over nights.

"And then you had to complicate affairs by declaring that you were going after the Bancroft heir's scalp, and I was old-fashioned enough to want to be loved for something besides money. You see, I had labeled you as my own private doughnut maker the first time I saw you!"

He was silent for so long that Penny prodded him lovingly.

"A penny for your thoughts," she said gayly.

"Just that," Tony answered contentedly. "A pretty Penny for my thoughts—always. I'm getting hungry, darling."

"For doughnuts?" she teased.

"For kisses," Tony asserted, parking the car before the Linwood courthouse. "Do you suppose anybody is looking?"

Penny didn't bother to make sure; instead, she lifted her lips to his, and was lost in a golden mist of happiness.





Her Fiancé's Wild Woman

By Robert M. Ducoté

ALTHOUGH it was practically a daily occurrence for Enid Linden to leave her apartment on St. Charles Avenue at about eight in the morning and walk briskly the fifteen blocks that took her to a building which towered skyward on Canal Street, on that particular morning she experienced a queer sensation that she was really aware of her surroundings for the first time. Overnight everything she beheld had become tinted with a rosy glow.

She gazed fascinatedly at bits of tender green spotted with venturesomely early blossoms on the narrow strip of neutral ground. She favored the boy who jerked soda at the corner drug store with a dazzling smile

that kept him whistling cheerily all that morning. As she swung into Canal Street, it seemed to her as if the buildings lining it, which she had at times considered even drab and colorless, were bathed in a golden sheen from some magic source. The streams of people hastening to their day's work had never appeared so blithe, so engrossed in their merry chatter.

It was one of those rare, zestful days at the beginning of April, but the cause of Enid's lilting spirits was more vital than the mere advent of spring. Only the night before, the man she loved with all the ardor of her young heart had taken her in his arms and had asked her to be his wife!

And after she had murmured against his tobacco-fragrant coat: "Oh, Lyle, it will make me so very happy!" he had produced a gorgeous ring from his pocket—an unbelievably large diamond nestling in platinum almost as scintillant as itself—and had slipped it on the third finger of her left hand. Enid had tasted the acme of all human bliss in that sacred moment.

She stole a glance at her hand now as she hastened along. With the sun's slanting rays on it, the ring greeted her with a mixture of red and green and blue fire. She was to be Lyle Payne's wife! The prospect was so glamorous that it was positively staggering.

Even Trixie's pessimistic comments earlier that morning had not served to take the edge from her elation. It was all that could have been expected from that hard-boiled little redhead with whom she shared her apartment, Enid had told herself reassuringly. Trixie was really a man-hater in a mild form, and therefore incapable of considering a love affair from a purely unbiased viewpoint.

"You're going to marry a doctor!" she had exclaimed when Enid had broken the great news to her over their coffee and toast. "Well, all I can say is that you're a mighty brave, trustful soul. All men are gay deceivers, honey, but a doctor—well, how can you expect them to be true to one woman when their offices are full of 'em all the time? A doctor's wife should either have a cold, indifferent nature or she ought to be blindly trustful. She oughtn't to know what jealousy is."

"Oh, you're too hard and bitter!" Enid had objected, tempering her criticism with a fond smile. "I'd trust Lyle to—the end of the world! Wait until you meet a man

like him. You'll change your mind then."

"Boloney! There's no such thing as a man who can be trusted!" scoffed the irrepressible Trixie. Then, her sharp blue-green eyes softening: "Don't pay any attention to my catty remarks, Enid dear. Of course, you'll be happy. I'm just a soured old spinster, wedded to the management of the hat department of our store. You can't expect me to get all fussed up over love's young dream."

She had Enid in her arms the next moment, and there ensued one of those precious moments between them that convinced Enid that deep in her heart the elder woman really loved her devotedly.

Although Enid had spoken with absolute sincerity when she had told Trixie she would trust young Doctor Lyle Payne to the end of the world, still her auburn-haired friend's sarcastic remarks lingered in her mind all day, like a tiny, despoiling smudge on the otherwise radiant pinkness of her little world. She had heard so often that being a doctor's wife was a difficult job, one demanding a tremendous amount of understanding and forbearance and trust. Perhaps all that was true, she conceded, but when it came to Lyle and her, there would be so much trust and faith that nothing else would be required.

Nevertheless, as she typed several letters filled with ponderous legal terms which her employer, Mr. Caldwell, had dictated, she recalled with disquieting vividness several occasions in the past when the green-eyed monster had impelled her into rashness. On numerous occasions at school, back in her little home town up-State, she had quarreled with girls she knew because the boy in whom she was interested had been

too attentive to them. And more recently, she had broken a friendship of years' standing with the girl sharing an apartment with her because she had suspected that the young man she was then going with was being lured away from her by her wiles. It was immediately after this that Trixie had come into her life.

Oh, yes, she was jealous, all right, Enid admitted to herself; perhaps more than ordinarily so, but the love and trust that existed between her and Lyle would make any trouble from that source an utter impossibility.

For a week after Lyle had given her the engagement ring, Enid lived in a blissful dream from which there seemed to be no awakening. The periods when she worked at her typewriter for Mr. Caldwell were blank, barren spaces. The only time that was thrillingly real for her was when she was with Lyle—having lunch with him; sitting, shoulders touching and hands clasped, in a moving-picture theater; or in the circle of his strong arms, trembling to the rapture of his ardent kisses.

And then a hideous monster, green of eyes and slimy of scales, crawled into the Eden she should have suspected was too perfect to last. Lyle lied to her—about a woman!

"I'm so disappointed I could almost chuck myself out of the window, darling," he told her over the telephone, "but I have an important case on hand, one I can't leave. I guess I'll have to break the engagement I had with you for lunch."

"Oh, I'm terribly disappointed, too, Lyle, but if it's a case of business before pleasure, it will have to be all right," Enid said, bravely cheerful.

"It's wonderful of you to take it that way, but it's nothing more than I expected from my wonderful little girl," Lyle said. "See you to-night!"

"You just dare fail to show up!" Enid threatened, a caress in her voice.

All the delight lunch had promised to afford her vanished into thin air. Enid leisurely set her desk in order, washed her hands, listlessly retinted her complexion, and slipped a little lace-edged blue straw hat over her rippling golden hair.

As she passed the outer door of Lyle's office, just three removed from the law office where she herself worked, her eyes lingered on it tenderly. Lyle was behind it somewhere, perhaps performing some delicate surgical operation to relieve a poor sufferer, missing even his lunch in his unselfishness. How energetic and ambitious he was! He was noble and so utterly adorable!

She was below Canal Street on her way to a small restaurant in the Vieux Carré, which she and Lyle loved to frequent because of its cozy, intimate atmosphere and excellent food, when she saw him. He was about to enter Adolphe's, a restaurant featuring a high-priced menu and catering to society people. And with him, laughing vampishly up into his eyes, was—of all women!—Joan Caldwell, her employer's flashy young wife.

At first Enid could only stand there and stare at them, going hot and cold by turns. Then a white-hot flame of jealousy swept through her. She was obsessed with a primitive impulse to leap forward and scratch at Joan's dark, slumberous eyes. But she allowed this fiery emotion to master her only for a moment.

Almost instantly a sense of deep, searing hurt had taken its place. It was just as if Lyle had plunged a knife into her heart. Her Lyle, the man she had promised to marry within a few weeks, had deceived her

to be with a woman like Joan! He had stood her up almost on the eve of their wedding to be gallivanting around with a fast creature like that—a married woman!

Whenever she saw Joan, Enid always thought unconsciously of the lithe, sinister grace of a panther. She was as dark of eyes and hair in a pretty but full-blown fashion as any Spanish señora, and she seemed to belong naturally in an atmosphere of fur coats, Watteau hats, dresses direct from Paris, and the luxuriously overstuffed cushions of a limousine. Although before her marriage to Stanley Caldwell she had been his private secretary, even as Enid now was, she seemed to have found the lap of luxury a perfect fit for her exotic little self.

Now Enid watched her and Lyle with tragic eyes until they disappeared behind the lace-veiled entrance doors of Adolphe's. Then she turned away blindly, sick at heart, forgetting that such prosaic things as food existed, to return to the privacy of Mr. Caldwell's office and give full sway to the tears she was fighting so hard to hold back.

That night there were icicles in the depths of her blue eyes as she greeted Lyle frigidly in the living room of her apartment.

"I hated like anything to break that lunch engagement," he said, seizing both her hands in his and drawing her closer, obviously with the intention of kissing her. "I had a very special patient to take care of, though."

Enid shrank from him, her face ghastly under her make-up. "So very special that you had to take her to luncheon at Adolphe's!" she flared, biting sarcasm.

Lyle's eyelids fluttered in what appeared to be guilt. "You saw us," he murmured confusedly.

"I most certainly did!" Enid snapped. "If any one had told me that you would ever have deceived me, Lyle Payne, I would have laughed in his face. I believed in you so implicitly, trusted you so utterly! And this is my reward! You tell me a lie to be with that fast woman, Joan Caldwell!"

"You don't understand, darling," Lyle said, gently patient, and refusing to release her hands despite her efforts to free herself. "And I don't know that I can explain it all thoroughly, either. You'll have to believe me and trust me, Enid precious. My taking Joan to lunch was, in a way, part of her treatment—oh, I know it's hard for you to see it that way, but please just believe what I say. In those nervous cases like Joan's it isn't always medicine that does the most good. You aren't still angry, are you, Enid?"

"You might at least have avoided insulting my intelligence with such a childish explanation!" Enid said hotly. "You break a date with me to take a wild woman to lunch, and then tell me it's part of her treatment! How absurd!"

"You're excited, Enid. You don't realize what you're saying," Lyle soothed.

Had Lyle displayed any anger at her harsh, suspicious words, Enid's own temper would probably have subsided. But his conciliatory manner and words impressed her as being an admission of guilt, and it inflamed her own emotions all the more. A torrid blast of wild, unreasoning jealousy whipped through her.

"You've been making a little fool of me, Lyle Payne!" she choked. "But thank Heaven I can see everything clearly now. It would never do for me to marry a doctor and have to be suspicious of all his pretty

women patients. I think we've both made a terrible mistake. You'll be free now, Lyle—free to run around with your wild women without having to tell me weird fairy tales about it!"

With a quick, determined motion, she slipped her engagement ring from her finger and dropped it on the table. Then she swung about and flounced out of the room.

"Enid—Enid, you can't mean ——" Lyle cried out huskily, miserably.

But the door had already slammed shut behind her.

For a moment Lyle stared, astounded, down at the jewel that seemed to scintillate mockingly up at him. Then his brow clouded with mounting pride and anger. His teeth clenched tightly; he dropped the ring into his pocket and strode out.

Enid's torturing remorse commenced within an hour. Why, oh, why had she done this mad thing? she asked herself over and over as she tossed about sleeplessly. Perhaps she had been wrong about Joan, after all. In her unreasoning jealousy, she had driven away the finest man in the world! She even wished she could die so as to escape the ghastly, bleak prospect of going on without Lyle, alone, futile.

While Trixie didn't tell her: "I told you so!" still she was too intensely human not to infer it in many ways. She was, however, the essence of kindness and sympathy.

"Don't worry, honey," she consoled. "There are thousands of better men than this two-timer in the world. You'll be laughing at all this within a month—going around with another man probably, and wondering how you could have allowed any one of them to break you up this way. You'll see."

"No, no, Trixie," Enid said desolately. "That's the terrible part. I'll never forget Lyle. Even though I know he hasn't been true to me, I still love him—oh, Heaven help me, I love him so much! I'm sure I'll never forget him."

And after that all Trixie could do was to shake her head compassionately.

During the drab days that followed, Enid fell into the habit of recalling every little event connected with her ill-fated affair with Lyle. She took a sort of morbid, bitter-sweet pleasure in so torturing herself.

She had first noticed him in the elevator of the office building, on which they were frequently passengers together. The clean-cut, well-groomed appearance of him had won her admiring attention. Then she had become aware that he must be every inch of six feet in height, that his figure was as slim and athletic as a crack tennis player's, and that his hair, a charming shade between brown and gold, was brushed smoothly back from a high forehead. The clear, steady eyes that locked with hers for fleeting moments were a quick, alert gray, richly tinted with softening blue. Despite its firm lines, Enid felt certain that his mouth could curve in a fascinating smile. All in all, he was the best-looking, most personable man she had ever seen.

One day Mr. Caldwell had been in the elevator with them, and quite naturally, an introduction had taken place. Lyle had invited them both to have lunch with him. After that he asked only Enid. It had been so thrilling, those golden days when they had known they loved each other, but as yet no word had been spoken of it.

Then finally had come her engage-

They found themselves standing face to face before the doorway of the restaurant. "Enid darling, I can't go on like this!" Lyle whispered huskily.



ment to Lyle, the engagement that had ended in black devastation.

For four days Enid tasted of the torture set aside for sweethearts who have quarreled. She had no appetite and slept but little. Her pretty face became pinched and drawn. Blue smudges formed under her eyes. And yet fierce, silly pride kept her from making any move that would let Lyle understand she was sorry.

And then on the fifth day of their estrangement, they found themselves

standing face to face before the doorway of the little restaurant in the Carré.

"Enid darling, I can't go on like this!" Lyle whispered huskily. "I've been the most miserable mortal!"

"Oh, and I, too!" Enid confessed softly.

"Have lunch with me—please!" Lyle entreated. "There's so much I have to say."

Under cover of the red-checked tablecloth, he slipped the ring back on her finger. Enid's eyes were like stars. Again she was being wafted along in the thrall of the course of true love running smooth.

"Now tell me with your own sweet lips that you believe I was with Joan that day for purely professional reasons," Lyle pleaded.

"Oh, I do, I do!" Enid assured him with the utter certainty of sublime faith.

There followed a month of unalloyed happiness. Enid struggled successfully against her jealous impulses. She would remind herself that Lyle loved her sufficiently to want to make her his wife whenever she saw smartly dressed, pretty women entering his office, and she would feel ashamed of her uncontrollable distrust.

Then one night she returned to the office to help Mr. Caldwell take care of a sudden accumulation of correspondence. Becoming drowsy, she decided to go to a near-by drug store for a cup of coffee.

She was surprised, as she went along the corridor, to observe that there was light behind the frosted glass of the door leading into Lyle's office. When she reached it, she saw that it was slightly ajar and caught the murmur of voices inside. One was Lyle's rich baritone, muffled and guarded. As she recognized the other, her heart seemed to stop beating. Joan Caldwell! Joan in there with Lyle at that time of night!

Conscious only of the urge of white-hot jealousy, she drew closer and listened.

"Joan, are you mad coming here like this at night?" she heard Lyle remonstrate hoarsely. "Suppose some one should see you!"

"I can't help it, Lyle!" Joan whimpered. "I had to come. I couldn't stand it any longer. Please don't scold."

Enid pushed the door open a bit farther and peered in with blazing eyes. Joan's slim, jeweled hands were fixed pleadingly on Lyle's

shoulders, and her face was very close to his. Something within Enid flashed crimson at the sight. She flung herself inside.

"I suppose all this is for purely professional reasons, too!" she accused shrilly. "Now I'm through, Lyle! I've seen with my own eyes what a low-down two-timer you are!"

While the dumfounded couple before her stared wide-eyed, she wrenched off her ring and flung it to the carpet at Lyle's feet.

"Give it to her!" she cried contemptuously. "I guess she can tell her husband some lie or other to account for it!"

The telephone on a small table beside her seemed to animate her with a sudden idea. She seized it avidly and gasped a number into the receiver.

"Hello! Mr. Caldwell?" she inquired quickly an instant later. "Do you know where your wife is? She's in Doctor Lyle Payne's office—alone with him. Don't you understand? They're making a fool of you!"

Before she could sob out any more, Lyle had wrenched the telephone from her hands.

"Are you crazy, Enid!" he cried, regarding her with horrified eyes.

Enid's clenched hand lashed vindictively at his face. It landed with a dull, bruising impact.

"No, you woman chaser!" she flung at him. "I'm just beginning to understand how crooked you are!"

Then suddenly she realized that she must get away. She couldn't tolerate being there with Lyle and that odious woman an instant longer. She turned and stumbled out, blinded by the hot tears coursing down her cheeks.

It wasn't until she had turned at right angles into the section of the corridor that led to the elevators

that she remembered it, and shuddered. All Enid could think of was the evil-looking little blue-steel automatic pistol Mr. Caldwell kept in one of the drawers of his desk!

Suppose he should secure it before dashing over to Lyle's office! Suppose—oh, a hundred terrible, tragic things! And it would all be her fault.

Suddenly she turned around and fairly flew back along the corridor. A loud, angry voice was issuing from Lyle's office—Mr. Caldwell's voice. Enid rushed in headlong, intent now only upon Lyle's safety.

Mr. Caldwell stood facing him beligerently, the automatic clutched in his hand. "You've broken up my home, Payne, and I'm not going to let you get away with it!"

Enid watched the automatic rise slowly in frozen fascination, as if she were experiencing a nightmare. Could it be possible that in another instant the man who had meant the very breath of life to her would be taken from her forever, that she would have to go on through life in dreary loneliness, crucified by the knowledge that her fiendish jealousy had brought about his end?

Like a tigress she sprang forward, shielding Lyle. She was vaguely conscious of a sharp, deafening report, felt an acutely painful burning sensation in her left shoulder, and then she sank into waves of shimmering darkness.

Enid lay back on her pillows in a sun-filled ward and smiled raptur-

ously up at Lyle, who was kneeling beside the bed. Her left shoulder was heavily bandaged, but the fingers of her right hand were rippling fondly through his hair.

"Poor Joan had been a drug addict for several months, and I was trying to cure her," he was saying softly. "She was terribly afraid her husband would find out about it. The night you found her in my office, she had tricked me into going there and then came to beg me to give her some of the stuff. Her husband has her in a sanitarium now, poor woman. Do you believe that, dear heart!"

"Absolutely! I'll never, never doubt you again, Lyle, no matter what happens. I've had my lesson and I'm cured." Enid's face was aglow with that celestial faith that passes all human understanding.

"My precious little hurt darling!" Lyle said gently, leaning over to kiss her. "There won't ever be any reason to doubt me. I'll be loving you so much that you won't ever get a chance."

Enid raised her golden head until she could see the huge, platinum-embedded diamond on the third finger of her left hand, which lay, incapable of motion because of the bandages, at her side. Its scintillant core twinkled a promise of a future bright with happiness. And as Lyle, his face tender with love, bent to kiss her, she knew in her heart of hearts that it would never again leave her finger.





A Girl Surrenders

By Velma Bradford

A Serial—Part II.

CHAPTER III.

A VERY charming picture!" said a masculine voice.

With a cry, Doreen whirled around, snatched up a satin negligee from the bed and pulled it around her, and turned to the intruder with flashing eyes.

"How dare you?" she cried furiously, in a voice that was tense with

anger. "What are you doing here? Get out of my room at once!"

But the intruder only smiled.

Leisurely he advanced across the room toward her.

"My dearest Lilian," he protested in a low and lazy voice, "I know you didn't expect me back so soon. But when I got to Cleveland I found that the man I went to see was ill. Can you blame me for deciding to fly

back at once to the lovely bride I was forced to leave outside the church door only this morning?"

His bride!

"Have you no welcome for your husband!"

A little cry of fear fell from Doreen's lips, an icy chill crept through her. Like one hypnotized, she stood grasping at the back of a chair with one hand, with the other clutching her flimsy draperies about her.

"My, but you're beautiful, dear!"

The stranger's voice was hoarse. Little dark flames were dancing in his eyes.

With a stride he crossed the stretch of pink carpet that lay between them and took her roughly in his arms.

He was kissing her, this man who had appeared suddenly in her room claiming her as his wife, crushing his lips down on hers, crushing her in his arms till she could hardly breathe.

He was a man whose name she didn't even know. The husband of her cousin Lilian!

This man was Lilian's husband, and she was masquerading as Lilian!

Frantically Doreen struggled in the man's grip, while his kisses rained down on her lips and eyes and shoulders.

With an effort she got free her hand and beat against him with her small clenched fist.

"Let me go, let me go!" she cried. "How dare you—how dare you? Let me go!"

The man gave a harsh laugh.

"What sort of an idiot do you take me for?" he demanded. "Aren't you my wife? Don't you belong to me?"

"I'm not—I don't! I'm not your wife!"

Doreen remembered the oath she had sworn to Lilian on the shape of the cross under that lightning-stunted tree.

She had sworn never to reveal to any one that she was not the girl she was pretending to be.

Everything depended on that, Lilian had assured her. But Lilian couldn't surely have foreseen that this would happen, and she hadn't played straight—had not said anything about being married.

"I'm not your wife! I'll never be your wife!" Doreen cried in a strangled voice.

"We'll see about that!" The man's voice was harsh and rough. "But I'm not as silly as you

seem to imagine. I can look after myself. You are my wife, and you're not going to escape me!"

His arm tightened about her once again.

Swiftly Doreen ducked her head and set her small white teeth in the flesh of his hand. A roar of pain came from the man.

"You little fiend!"

But his grip had involuntarily slackened.

With an effort Doreen wriggled herself free, leaving the pink satin negligee in his grasp.

She ran across the room and

THE STORY SO FAR:

DOREEN TRENT, tired of her dull life in a small town, eagerly consents to change places with her cousin Lilian, a famous actress, who looks exactly like her. Lilian has an invitation to go to Medhurst Hall, but has other plans made and, not wishing to refuse the invitation, asks Doreen to go in her place. While there Doreen meets and falls in love with Richard Ashmore. She goes to her room that night and while she is undressing a man comes in, greets her as Lilian, and calls her his wife, Mrs. Claude Moreton.

threw about her bare shoulders the gray squirrel coat that was flung over a chair, then made for the door.

Panic possessed her now. In her moment of terror the memory of that oath sworn to Lilian was forgotten. Nothing mattered except that she must get away from this man, even if she announced to all the house that she was an impostor.

But the door refused to yield. Desperately her fingers fumbled but she couldn't find the key. There came a laugh from behind her.

"The key is in my pocket. You're caught, my dear little bride."

He was coming nearer again—nearer. She could feel his breath upon her cheek.

She shrank back and huddled against the door. His fingers touched her bare arms again, sending a shudder of repulsion through every nerve.

A shrill, hysterical cry broke from her.

"I'm not your wife. I've never even seen you before. I don't know your name. Let me go—let me go!"

Then once more she was struggling in his arms, and his voice sounded rough in her ears.

"I can't see what the game is, trying to foist that silly stuff on me. I'm not a fool. I know you married me for my money, Mrs. Claude Moreton. But fair is fair, isn't it?"

A wave of despair surged over her, but fiercely, like a tigress she fought—a tigress trapped and at the mercy of superior force.

The world was spinning around her, the room growing darker and darker. Her strength was failing.

She was conscious now only of those dark flames that were the man's eyes, conscious that he had picked her up in his arms.

Then merciful blackness descended upon her, and she knew no more.

The first shafts of cold, gray morning light made their way through the thick curtains of rose-colored brocade, lightening the shadows of the night.

Doreen stirred uneasily in her restless, troubled sleep, and then suddenly, all in a moment, sleep was far from her and she was wide awake.

Her head ached. There seemed to be a black load of apprehension and despair weighing down upon her. Her nerves were numb with terror, as though some evil was pursuing her from which she must flee.

Hastily she raised herself on her elbow, peering into the shadows about her.

Where was she? What had happened?

The feel of silk beneath her body, the soft touch of satin when she put out her hand. A confused mass of sensation and memories surged over her. With a cry she sprang from the bed to the thick carpet on the floor, ran across to the tall windows and dragged back the curtains.

A flood of cold gray daylight swept into the room—the lovely room with the shimmering silver walls and ceiling, the thick rose carpet on the floor and a scatter of blue enamel toilet things on the crystal slab of the dressing table. It showed an evening gown of ivory velvet thrown across one chair, and on the floor a crumpled satin negligee.

For a moment Doreen stood still while memory came flooding back of that intruder in the early hours who was Lilian's husband, who had insisted that she was Lilian.

She covered her face with her hands and a low moan broke from her lips as she staggered to the divan

and threw herself down among the pillows in a tempest of despair.

So this was the end of the great adventure on which she had set out so gayly the evening before.

Now in the cold gray daylight she was face to face with facts.

She shook and trembled as though a fever racked her slim body, and bit into the pillows lest she should scream out in the depths of her agony and despair.

That man—who was he? Mrs. Claude Moreton he had called her. She had never even heard the name before.

Suddenly a new fear shot through her brain. Where was he? She sat up and looked around, then shrank back again in a new access of terror as a knock sounded on the door.

Had he come back again?—she wondered. But not a word would cross her parched lips to forbid him to enter, and the door opened.

Her nails dug into her palms. She started to her feet. But it was only the maid who had helped her dress the night before, a pleasant-faced girl in gray, bearing breakfast on a dainty tray.

"I hope you've slept well?" The girl smiled at her as she set down the tray on the small bedside table. "Shall I turn on your bath now or would you rather wait till later?"

Doreen moistened her lips. It seemed to her that everybody must know of the part she was playing, but the girl was waiting with a friendly, smiling glance. With an effort Doreen pulled herself together.

"Yes, please, run it now," she managed to force the words from between her dry lips.

The girl poured out a cup of coffee and placed it close to her hand, then passed through to the bathroom.

Doreen put out a trembling hand and took the cup of coffee; gulped

down the hot liquid that was like nectar to her dry, parched throat.

It seemed strange that life should be going on like this, that she should be doing the ordinary little actions of every day just as though nothing had happened. Though drinking coffee from egg-shell china in a luxurious bedroom wasn't an ordinary everyday occurrence.

This time yesterday morning she had been already hard at work in the packing room at the factory—still sleepy, rather hungry and shivering with the cold.

By this time her father and step-mother knew that she had been out of the house all night. That meant that the door would be shut in her face when she did go back. They would say that a girl who stayed out all night wasn't any good.

"The bath is ready and the towels hot and waiting. Is there anything else you would like? Shall I take out a dress?" asked the smiling maid at her side.

"No, thanks. I haven't decided what to wear. Please don't wait."

Of course she couldn't go on masquerading as Lilian after what had happened. She must get away at once. She must write to Lilian—only she didn't know where Lilian was.

That brought her up sharp. Her cousin had told her that she would write. But where she was, Doreen didn't know. Only one thing she knew for certain. She must get out of the house before she met again the man who was Lilian's husband.

She drank a second cup of coffee, then sprang out of bed and hurried to the bathroom where a sunken bath of pale-green marble was reached by steps from the black marble floor.

The scent of roses met her from a great crystal jar of pink bath crys-

tals. Thankfully she plunged into the water and lay in the steamy, scented luxuriance.

When presently she emerged pink and dripping to wrap herself in a huge bath towel, she felt better able to face the world again.

What had happened was not her fault. She had been wrong to agree to take her cousin's place, but that was the worst that anybody could say of her.

She couldn't go on pretending to be Lilian with that man about. Equally she couldn't go back to her old life.

Lilian had promised to help her to find work in New York, had promised to get her into the chorus of her new show at the end of the week when she came back.

Doreen chose a neat two-piece suit of blue tweed from the wardrobe in which Lilian's trunks had been unpacked, plain but beautifully tailored with a big dark fur collar and a tiny blue hat that seemed to intensify the blue in her eyes.

Doreen pulled on a pair of leather gloves, picked up a crocodile bag and walked out of the room. She must get away from this house and the false position into which she had strayed. She must get away from Claude Moreton.

She could send for Lilian's things afterward, or leave them behind until Lilian reappeared. But she must get away at once.

With throbbing nerves she hurried along the corridor and down the great staircase of polished oak that led into the paneled hall below.

There did not seem to be any one in the house. Vaguely she remembered talk of an early hunting meet.

Her host had inquired last night if she would like to go, but she had refused.

Stepping lightly she almost ran across the great hall with its glowing Persian rugs.

Just as she reached the door a manservant stepped forward. He bore a small silver tray on which was a letter.

"Miss Rose, miss?" he questioned respectfully. "I was just going to send up this letter. Mr. Moreton left it when he went this morning."

Doreen felt a wave of color sweep up into her face, but the man's expression was utterly blank as he presented the salver. It meant nothing to him that one guest should leave a letter for another.

Controlling the shaking of her fingers, Doreen took the envelope. She had a quick impulse to crush it in her palm unread and stamp it underfoot, but restrained herself.

Then swiftly she passed out of the great house into the silver-gray morning.

Swiftly she walked through the grounds of the great house till a handsome wrought-iron gate in the high, moss-grown stone wall brought her into a tree-hung road.

How often she had glanced through that gate wistfully toward the house as toward a forbidden paradise that she might never hope to enter! Yet now she was hastening away from it, resolved never to return!

She stared at the letter she still held clutched in her hand, then slowly she tore it open.

MY LITTLE WIFE: By the time you get this I shall be on my way West. I may as well confess now that I never meant to go yesterday at all. I had the impression—a wrong one as it turned out—that you didn't mean to go to Medhurst Hall. That you had some other plan in that pretty head of yours that you didn't want me to suspect. I apologize for the suspicion. You are lovelier even than I thought you. I shall count every day until I get back to



His bride! A little cry of fear fell from Doreen's lips, an icy chill crept through her.

you. I will respect your desire to keep our marriage secret, though I still don't understand your reasons. But a beautiful girl is entitled to her caprices. I kiss you a thousand times.

Your adoring husband, C. M.

Doreen drew a long breath of thankfulness as she crushed the let-

ter in the palm of her hand. He had gone away.

What was Lilian doing? What was the plan of which she had been made the victim?—Doreen wondered.

Involuntarily she stepped into the grass at the side of the narrow road

as a large, powerful car came racing toward her.

With a grinding of brakes the car slid suddenly to a standstill, and a young man leaped out.

It was Richard Ashmore!

"This is luck!" he exclaimed eagerly, catching her hand in a tight, warm clasp. "I've hardly been daring to hope that you had not gone to the meet this morning."

"No, I didn't go!" Doreen answered in a low voice, conscious of a strange tumult at her heart.

"I'm so glad!" He seemed to have forgotten to let go her hand. "I came over this morning on purpose to find you. I wonder if you would care to come for a drive with me. We might get out into the country and have lunch at a little hotel I know up in the hills. It would be rather fun—if you don't think you'd be bored."

Doreen stood silent for a minute. She was running away from Medhurst Hall—only she didn't know where she was going.

But it was Claude Moreton that she was really running away from, and he had gone already. She was conscious of an overmastering desire to accept Richard Ashmore's invitation, to seat herself beside him in the car and feel the fresh, clean air sweeping past her.

"I would love to come," she said quickly, and got in beside him while he tucked a warm rug carefully about her.

Then he, too, leaped in and the car started off.

She felt different now, altogether different.

The load of shame and humiliation had slipped from her as though last night had never been.

It was Richard Ashmore now who filled the whole landscape and all her thoughts.

She sat contentedly beside him as in a dream, not talking much, but happy just to be with him.

They lunched together in a small hotel where their sharpened appetites lent a zest to the plain but excellent country food.

He talked with enthusiasm about his motoring, his interest in airplanes and flying, never mentioning money but taking it so much for granted that Doreen knew he must be wealthy, and spoke of his family, his mother to whom he was devoted, his sister, his young brother, his dogs.

"I would love to have you meet them," he told her. "I'm sure you would like them. But it's time we hit the homeward trail," he added with an apologetic laugh. "I don't know what has come over me. I don't usually talk so much about myself."

He tucked her into the car once more, but now a silence, intimate and without restraint, fell over them suddenly.

The sun dropped to the horizon, into a heavy bank of clouds spreading out trailing mists of crimson and dull gold. The hills grew almost purple in the dusk. Down below shone the lights of Medhurst Hall, which she had meant to leave that morning forever!

Doreen took a swift and sudden resolution. She wasn't going to allow herself to be driven away by what had happened.

Claude Moreton was gone. She had given her word to Lilian and she was going to see this thing through. Why should she give up the chance of seeing Richard Ashmore again?

If she left Medhurst Hall she would have to sink back into the old poverty, the old dreary, purposeless life. She wasn't going back to be Doreen Trent again. That life was

over, finished with. Her eyes flashed with a new resolution.

They were skirting Medville now. In the morning Richard Ashmore had avoided the main street. Now he made a turn that brought them down into the heart of the town.

"Sorry," he apologized, "but I must get some gas. She is down to the last few drops."

He slowed down the car in the glare of a brilliant light in front of a garage.

Whistles were sounding. And hundreds of men and girls were streaming out of the factories.

Doreen shrank back against the cushions of the car. Suppose any of the girls she worked with should recognize her?

What would they think? Why did he have to stop just here?

The tank was filled, the pipe disconnected and Doreen drew a breath of relief.

Then suddenly she went rigid.

Standing still in the street, staring at her with wide, incredulous eyes, was her father!

He was coming toward her. He was going to speak to her—to claim her as his daughter, to denounce her!

In one vivid flash all the consequences passed through her mind. She would be unmasked and her deception broadcast to every one at Medville Hall. Both Lilian and herself would be disgraced. Worst of all, the man beside her would know her for an impostor!

It seemed to Doreen ages that she sat in the car by Richard Ashmore's side waiting for the blow to fall.

The crowds in the busy little street shrank to a mere blur of faces surrounding her father's face, which was stern, angry, menacing and reproachful and, coming closer—closer.

In her ears rang her companion's

cheery good night to the garage man, then Richard Ashmore touched the accelerator and they were moving forward.

Through the noise of the traffic, she heard a rough, harsh voice: "Doreen, my own daughter——" But the rest of her father's words were lost.

She saw his hand shoot out to grab at the car, but it moved from his grasp.

Fearfully she glanced at her companion. His eyes were fixed on the road ahead of him as he steered through the busy street where the crowds of men and girls on their way home, spread from the pavements into the road.

Then he turned sharply into a side street, heading for the outskirts of the little town once more.

Doreen drew a long, shaking breath of relief. The danger was past. Her deception hadn't been discovered.

Once again they began to climb up the steep tree-hung road down which they had passed in the morning.

It was dark now, and a white mist was gathering in the valley below, lying like a thick bridal veil over the rushing river, showing the lights of the town crimsoned and frayed. Above the wooded slopes on the opposite side of the valley rose the moon, nearly full, frostily silver in the clear night sky.

Just on the crest of the hilly road Richard Ashmore stopped the car and silence fell.

Doreen was conscious that her heart was beating quickly and jerkily, that something in her throat seemed to be suffocating her, that all her nerves were tingling. She was conscious in every fiber of her body of the man beside her who had turned and was looking at her with a deep and intent gaze. She wanted

to speak, to do something to break the tension, but she could not.

Suddenly she felt his hand, warm and strong upon her own, taking both of hers into his one palm. Then his other arm went around her, drawing her suddenly, hungrily close against him.

"You lovely, lovely thing!" he whispered huskily. "Oh, my dear, it has been heaven to be with you. I loved you the first moment I saw you. I knew then that you were the only girl in the world for me. My dream girl. The girl I've been looking for all my life! I love you, I want you for my wife. Will you marry me?"

Marry him! He wanted her to marry him—this wonderful fairy prince of whom she had dreamed in her inmost heart.

A warm gush of joy and happiness swept over her. The arm about her strained her closer so that her head was crushed against his rough tweed shoulder, his face came down to hers, his lips sought hers in a long kiss.

For one ineffably perfect moment she lay in his arms, cleared of all thought, all consciousness except the wonder of his lips on hers and of his arms about her.

His wife! The moment of blind ecstasy passed and suddenly thought and memory came flooding back to her.

Marry him! That would be to trick and deceive him. He was offering her so much—his love, his adoration, his wealth and position.

What would she have to give him in return? A low cry of pain fell from her lips. She struggled to escape from his arms.

"No, no! I can't—can't!" she whispered brokenly.

She felt him stiffen, felt the pressure of his arms relax.

"You can't?" he repeated slowly.

"Do you mean there is another man you love?"

Her breath caught in her throat.

"No. There is no one—no one else I love," Doreen said in a strangled voice.

He gave a little laugh of relief and triumph.

"Then that is all right! You do love me, darling, I swear you do. You wouldn't have kissed me like that just now if you didn't love me just a little." He tilted up her face. "Look me in the eyes, sweetheart. You do love me—you can't deny it! Say that you love me?"

"Yes, I do!" Her words came in little jerks. "I do love you, but I can't marry you!"

He laughed again, this time with relief.

"If you love me that is all that matters for the present!" he declared. "I've surprised you! I've spoken too soon. You'll get used to the idea. You needn't say 'Yes' just now, but I'm not going to take 'No' for an answer!" He drew her closer into his arms again.

The sweet and poignant pain of it! To hear him say that he refused to accept her refusal. To hear him sweeping aside her protests as of no account!

A gush of tears stung her eyelids, welled up and rolled slowly down her cheeks.

"Listen, darling," he was speaking softly again. "I must go away tonight. I've got to spend several days carrying out some airplane trials. But at the end of the week I shall be back in New York. I shall come and see you then. By that time you'll have realized how ridiculous it is to say you can't marry me when you admit you love me and——"

But desperately in a panic she interrupted him.



So this was the end of the great adventure on which she had set out so gayly the evening before. Now in the cold gray daylight she was face to face with facts.

"No, no. Oh, can't I make you understand? There are things that stand between us, things that have happened!"

If she didn't make him understand and go away from her now, Doreen knew suddenly that she would never have the strength to insist again. She loved him too much. Every moment they passed together, every word he spoke made her care more.

This was the moment for confession. If she didn't tell him now she never would.

"Whatever has happened nothing can stand between us!" he returned in a low voice that was hoarse with emotion. "Darling, I love you too much. If you've any secrets you can keep them. Your life in the past is your own. It is the future that belongs to me. And I know you're

sweet and good. So whatever is worrying that darling little head, just forget it, sweetheart, and put it away from you!"

Doreen drew a little choking breath.

She was good, had always been good. There had never been any episode in her life of which she need feel ashamed, no stolen kisses nor flirtations nor the things that most of her companions regarded as quite harmless fun.

No man of her acquaintance had ever appealed to her because she had always been, half unconsciously, waiting for the one man of whom she had dreamed.

What had happened hadn't been her fault. Why should she sacrifice all her life's happiness because of something that she couldn't help?

A swift revulsion of feeling swept over her. She had been the victim of Lilian's plot. She had not willingly deceived any one. She had not known her cousin was married.

His arms went about her again, and this time Richard kissed her unresistingly. He took her left hand in his, gently pulled off her glove, raised her fingers to his lips.

"When I come for you in New York I shall get you a proper ring," he said with calm assurance. "Meantime I'd like you to wear this one."

He took a ring with a crest engraved upon a large flat cornelian from his little finger and slipped it onto hers. It was only the middle finger that would hold it. Once again he raised it to his lips.

"And it won't be long before I put a second ring there, too. Because I can't—I won't wait long for you, sweetheart. I want you too much! Now good-by, my beloved! I must take you back to the house, and then be on my way. But where shall I find you in New York?"

Doreen had never been in New York in her life. She had no address there, no friends except Lilian. Suddenly the name of the theater where Lilian was to play in her new show came into her head.

"You can write care of the theater—the Harmony Theater," she said with a little catch in her voice.

"I shan't need to write it down. I'll remember," he returned with a tender smile. "I had quite forgotten you were an actress. Somehow you're not a bit like one! I mean you're not always talking about the stage. Anyway, you're not going to be one for much longer! I can't spare you. It will be an eternity before I see you again."

He drove her down the hill and up to the great, pillared doorway of Medhurst Hall.

At the top of the steps she turned to wave to him, then as the car slipped out of the great gates again she entered the house.

In the doorway was Marise Renfield, the daughter of the house, a frown upon her haughty, petulant face.

"Miss Rose," she exclaimed, "so here you are! The Harmony Theater has been trying to get you all the afternoon on the telephone."

"The Harmony Theater!" A little stab of dismay shot through Doreen. She must remember that she was Lilian, not Doreen. But how on earth was she to speak to Lilian's manager without giving herself away? However, she forced herself to control her agitation.

"I'm so sorry," she apologized, "but I've been out with Mr. Ashmore in his car."

"So I see!" Marise Renfield's dark eyes gleamed and her scarlet mouth tightened. She leaned slightly toward the other girl and every curve of her figure betrayed hostility.

"Miss Rose, I think we had better understand each other," she said in low, deliberate tones, "I'm not a prude and I know the world as well as other people. Your affairs are no concern of mine. But Richard Ashmore's affairs are! To save any misunderstanding I may as well tell you now that we are almost engaged. I don't need to say anything more, I hope."

"Really, Miss Renfield——" Doreen began haughtily.

But the other swept aside her words with an impatient movement of her hand.

"Let's not say any more about it. Anyway, the message I have to give you from the Harmony Theater is that you must return to town immediately as rehearsals are starting to-morrow morning. They were so insistent about it that I took the liberty of calling up to engage a chair for you on the seven-thirty express, and I have ordered the car for you at seven-fifteen. I think you will find that my maid has done most of your packing. We're very sorry you have to leave, of course, but perhaps in the circumstances it is just as well." With a hostile, thin-lipped smile the dark-haired girl moved away.

In a half-dazed fashion Doreen went upstairs to the pink and silver bedroom.

She wasn't sorry to be leaving Medville Hall. Rather she was thankful. The room seemed to suffocate her as she entered. She sat down on the bed and covered her face with her hands.

What a muddle everything was! Marise Renfield almost engaged to Richard Ashmore!

That could not be true. She didn't believe it. He wasn't the sort of man to make love to two girls at the same time. Perhaps Marise was in

love with him and wanted to warn her off.

Doreen gave a little shiver at the thought of the hostility in the other's looks and voice. Marise Renfield hated her because she had been out with Richard Ashmore in his car. She would hate her still more when she knew that they were going to be married.

There was a letter from Lilian on the dressing table, urging on her once again the absolute need of secrecy and of carrying the deception through. There wasn't any address on it, and even the postmark was almost obliterated.

Now the Harmony Theater was summoning her to New York to begin rehearsals!

What was she to do? She had given Lilian a sacred oath not to fail her.

Could she telephone the Harmony Theater that she was ill and couldn't rehearse? But Lilian might lose the job if she did that.

If she went to the rehearsals as Lilian, could she hope to escape detection? Her dancing used to be better than her cousin's when they practised together in that old shed at home. She had always believed secretly that she could act if she ever had the chance. She must go on pretending to be Lilian.

As she pulled Lilian's hat over her vivid hair and slipped into Lilian's squirrel coat and went downstairs to enter the car that was to take her to Medville to catch the night express, Doreen felt her spirits rise with a sense of wild adventure.

She would carry on. She wouldn't let Lilian down. In any case, she couldn't keep away from the theater because of the letters that Richard Ashmore was to send to her there.

At the end of the week Lilian

would be back in New York and could slip into her place at the theater. Then she would be able to explain things to the man she loved, and tell him that she was Doreen—not Lilian.

CHAPTER IV.

The week passed, but still Lilian did not return. Another letter from her had been forwarded to Doreen from Medhurst Hall.

Doreen darling, for Heaven's sake carry on a bit longer. You simply must. I'll write you again when you go to New York. It won't be for long now. When I come back I'll explain everything. You've been a brick. I can't tell you how grateful I am.

She had inclosed money, but still no address.

The rehearsals were going wonderfully. This was a different theater from the one in which Lilian had appeared before, and the cast was one that knew Lilian only by name. The producer was pleased with Doreen, and it was wonderful how easily she responded to all his suggestions.

The lure of the footlights had caught her, even though she had not yet appeared before them.

She was eager and excited about the coming production. Somehow it was difficult to realize that she wouldn't be appearing in it herself after all.

But it was even more wonderful and exciting to know that Richard Ashmore was back now in New York. She was to meet him when the rehearsal was over in the lobby of the Rex Hotel for tea, and afterward they were to buy her engagement ring.

For the last hour Doreen had been watching the clock behind the scenes as the rehearsal proceeded.

At four o'clock the producer announced that work was over for the day, and before he could possibly change his mind, Doreen hurried out of the theater. Hastily she called a taxi, and told the man to take her to the Rex.

At last the taxi stopped before the great hotel and Doreen jumped out. She was a few minutes early.

She entered the lobby of the hotel and glanced eagerly about her, but the man she had come to meet was not there yet.

She decided to sit and wait where she could see and be easily seen. She stiffened suddenly. Her eyes grew wide, her limbs rigid.

Standing only a few yards away from her was Claude Moreton, Lilian's husband, the man who had claimed her as his wife that night at Medhurst! And she had come here to meet Dick Ashmore!

Doreen felt as though she were rooted to the ground. She couldn't move, couldn't turn and run away.

The horror of that night at Medhurst Hall rushed back over her as she saw again the man who claimed her as his wife.

He was moving slowly toward her. He was going to claim her before Richard Ashmore, who would be here at any moment now!

Doreen glanced at a clock in front of her. It was just on four o'clock. She could see the big hand move as she watched.

A long musical stroke boomed out. She was to meet the man she loved at four. Richard Ashmore, who wanted to marry her—whom she loved and wanted to marry.

But this other man was coming toward her, sinister and menacing.

Measured by the clock it was only a few seconds that she stood there, frozen with terror. Then the first instinct of mankind came to her

aid, the need for self-preservation, for self-protection.

After all, she had been an actress now for the better part of a week! Perhaps all girls are actresses more or less, when a swift, unforeseen crisis faces them.

So it was only the flicker of an eyelid that betrayed Doreen's agitation, and then her gaze was calm and clear as before as she faced with an expression of surprise the man whom she had last seen at Medhurst Hall.

"Lilian!" he said thickly, almost apologetically, it might have seemed. "I just got back to-day. I flew back quite unexpectedly. There wasn't time to warn you."

Fixedly, with aloof politeness, Doreen faced him, permitting a puzzled expression to appear on her lovely face.

"I'm sorry. I'm afraid there is a mistake somewhere. You must be mistaking me for some one else, I'm sure."

The man's face darkened.

"What is the idea?" he demanded brusquely. "Do you imagine I don't know my own wife when I meet her?"

Suppose he was obstinate and wouldn't be convinced. Her eyes sought the clock. She allowed her face to relax into a slight smile.

"Do you know," she said in an aloof, yet friendly manner, "this is the second time to-day I've been mistaken for some one else. Do you mind telling me exactly who you think I am?"

He made an impatient noise, but all the same a faint expression of bewilderment came into his eyes.

"I think you are my wife," he returned shortly, "who is known to the public as Lilian Rose, the actress. I don't in the least understand."

Doreen interrupted him with a clear little laugh, and as though im-

pulsively put out her small gloved hand toward him.

"I guessed as much!" she exclaimed gayly. "But you're wrong! Lilian is my cousin. We are terribly alike. But I haven't seen her for some time. She never told me she was married! You are Mr.—" She paused interrogatively, waiting for him to supply the name.

The man stared at her for a minute with obvious uncertainty in his eyes, then a slow flush spread over his face.

"Moreton," he answered, "Claude Moreton. I'm dreadfully sorry. No, I'm not really, since it has made me acquainted with you! But you see you're as like as two peas. Though I suppose, if one looks closely, there are slight differences."

His eyes were surveying her boldly, with open admiration. Little dark flames leaped to them that made her skin go goosefleshy. She had seen those flames in his eyes before.

"Won't you sit down and have some tea with me?" asked the man eagerly. "After all, we're relations, aren't we? We ought to be better acquainted."

A little shiver ran through her.

"I'm sorry," she lied. "I came here to meet some one—my fiancé. Ah, there he is!" She drew a quick breath as her anxiously roving glance caught sight of Richard Ashmore's tall, athletic figure come striding through the revolving door. "Good afternoon, Mr. Moreton, I must go."

With heightened color, feeling like a criminal reprieved from execution, she moved quickly forward to meet the man she loved.

Doreen had the sensation of one walking blindfold on the edge of a precipice as, trembling and shaking in every limb in spite of her outward

calm, she came face to face with Richard, felt the warm, strong pressure of his hand on hers.

"Darling!" his voice was low and thrilling. "It is wonderful to see you! My train was half an hour late. I've just arrived. Please forgive me. Let us have tea."

"No. Let us not have tea here," she spoke quickly, hurriedly. She wouldn't risk an encounter between these two men. If they stayed here Claude Moreton might come over and join them. "Couldn't we go somewhere quieter, where we can talk?"



The man's face darkened. "What is the idea?" he demanded brusquely. "Do you imagine I don't know my own wife when I meet her?"

"Right! There's a little place just off Broadway—a few yards away." His hand was warm and comforting on her arm as he steered her once more through the revolving doors, a short distance down the busy thoroughfare, and into a small, comfortable-looking room with deep chairs and softly shaded lights.

"You know," he went on, when the first inevitable things had been said, "it gave me quite a shock when

I came into that place and saw you talking to that cad, Moreton. He is a man for any decent girl to avoid. How on earth did you ever meet him?"

Doreen swallowed something in her throat. So Richard Ashmore knew Claude Moreton!

She hadn't reckoned on that. Somehow it made things more complicated.

"As a matter of fact," she forced a



light laugh, "I don't know him at all." She heard his start and the sharp intake of his breath. "He mistook me just now for my cousin. We're extraordinarily alike, you know. People are always making mistakes about us. It happened once before to-day. And she's on the stage, too. I expect one day you'll be meeting her in the street and thinking she is me!" She spoke hurriedly and rather jerkily.

"I cannot see myself mistaking anybody else for you!" he scoffed. "As for that fellow Moreton, I should advise both you and your cousin to cut the acquaintance. His reputation isn't any too good. But let us think of something pleasanter. When you are ready we will go and see about that ring. I thought a large square cut emerald—unless you're superstitious and afraid of emeralds? When that little business is transacted, we can begin to talk about other things—where you're going to dine with me to-night, for instance, and where we're going for our honeymoon!"

Her fears seemed to be subsiding. It was wonderful, thrilling to be wooed like this. She hadn't so far even given him her promise to marry him, and yet here she was being carried off to buy her engagement ring.

It was wonderful to be seated for the first time in her life inside the shop with deferential salesmen displaying trays and cases of gorgeous and glittering jewels!

There were diamonds like living flames struggling to escape from their prisons, chains of them that seemed to be composed of drops of fire; soft, milky-looking pearls with the sheen of moonlight on tropic seas; emeralds green and gorgeous.

It was one of these that Richard Ashmore selected and slipped onto

her slim finger that had grown so soft and white since she had ceased to be a packer in the factory.

It was a huge, square cut gem that winked and gleamed in a thin, circling framework of tiny diamonds. It was a wonderful ring, like nothing she had ever imagined for herself before.

They dined together in an expensive restaurant, where they could dance, and where the food and wine seemed like nectar and ambrosia to the girl whose soul had been starved of color and love and beauty though she loved them so much.

To dance to the strains of that wonderful music with her fiancé's arm about her, pressing her close against him, with his eyes looking down upon her with a mixture of passion and tenderness and reverential adoration, with her hair just lightly touching his cheek, seemed like heaven to Doreen. If only they could go on and on like this forever!

The last wailing notes of the violins died away and the restaurant emptied. In a taxi on the way to her home, Richard Ashmore's arms closed about the girl he loved.

"To-morrow I'm going to give notice of our wedding," he whispered huskily. "We've nothing to wait for, darling, neither you nor I. We belong to each other so utterly that we must not stay apart. I won't wait for you longer than a week.

A little cry that was half dismay escaped her.

"Oh, so soon? Couldn't we just be engaged for a while?"

Richard Ashmore's arm held her closer. There was a rough note in his voice as he answered:

"No. It is not possible. I love you too much, sweetheart, I want you too much. I shan't have a moment's real happiness until you be-

long to me. I want you, all of you, for my own—for my wife. I can't share you with anybody. To-morrow you must give them notice at the theater. A week from to-day we shall be married."

Her eyes closed, her lips melted beneath his kiss. He loved her and she loved him!

Gently his arms released her as the taxi turned into the gloomy street where Doreen lived.

"This time next week we shan't have to part!" he breathed.

How her heart throbbed and her pulses raced to those whispered words of parting!

Lightly, as though on air, she ran up the steps to the quiet house where she was living.

As she passed into the house on her way to the elevator a girl rose from one of the chairs to meet her, a girl in a shabby brown tweed coat and a dowdy little felt hat pulled down over her golden hair.

"Oh, there you are at last, Doreen! I've been waiting ages. Can you get me something to eat. And can you put me up for the night?"

Doreen gave a little cry of joy as she recognized her cousin.

"Lilian! Thank Heaven you've come!" she cried fervently. "We'll make some tea up in my room. There is a sofa where I can sleep. Come on."

Fate was being good to her and clearing the obstacles out of her path.

She led the way upstairs and soon the two girls were sitting before the open fire drinking tea.

But Lilian's promised explanation was not forthcoming. Instead she sat with her brows drawn together into a slight frown, staring into the fire, while Doreen plunged into a recital of what had happened that night at Medhurst Hall.

Suddenly Lilian gave a sharp exclamation and drew in her breath quickly.

"You say that Claude Moreton was there?" she cried quickly. "But, Doreen, what did you do? You didn't give me away, did you?" She laid her hand upon her cousin's arm.

Doreen shivered and passed her hand across her eyes.

"I can't bear to think of it," she returned in a broken whisper. "You hadn't told me, you hadn't warned me! He wouldn't believe I wasn't you. He locked the door and I struggled with him. Then I fainted. It was wrong of you! You had no right to keep me in ignorance that you were married!"

A low sob broke from her and her shoulders heaved convulsively. Her cousin stared at her with her mouth open.

"Doreen!" she gasped. "I never dreamed. I thought he was out of town. But do you mean he doesn't know the truth?"

Her voice was hoarse and once again her hand gripped her cousin's wrist, hot and trembling.

Doreen shook her head.

"No. He still thinks it was you at Medhurst. The next morning he went away early. Now he is back in town again. I met him this afternoon in the lobby of the Rex Hotel. He accosted me again as his wife and said he hadn't had time to let me know of his return. I told him he had made a mistake, that I was your cousin. I had hard work to make him believe it."

The older girl drew a long breath and lit a cigarette with fingers that trembled.

"You've been a brick, Doreen," she said at last with a queer little laugh. "I promised you an explanation and you deserve it. Of course, I only married Claude Moreton for

his money. But there was another man. It was lucky I thought of getting you to take my place. It would have about spoiled everything if Claude Moreton had found I wasn't at Medhurst after all!"

"Lucky!" Doreen jumped to her feet with tragic eyes and set lips. "Lucky!" she repeated. "For you, perhaps, Lilian! But what about me? Now I've met a man I love with all my heart. I'm going to marry him. But I shall always be wondering—suppose he finds out?"

She covered her face with her hands and began to sob uncontrollably.

Her cousin frowned impatiently.

"Don't be foolish, Doreen!" she exclaimed quickly. "Nobody can blame you. It was I who was at Medhurst, or so everybody will think. There won't be anything to connect you with Medhurst."

Doreen gave a bitter little laugh.

"Except that it was there that I met the man I am going to marry," she said quickly. "So I can hardly pretend that I wasn't there!"

Lilian gave a sharp exclamation.

"What is his name?"

"Ashmore—Richard Ashmore!"

Doreen's face softened as she spoke and held out her hand toward her cousin. "I've been with him to-day. He bought me this ring. Isn't it lovely? We're to be married a week from to-day!"

"Do you mean Richard Ashmore," her cousin's voice was sharp with sudden envy, "the racing and flying man? Doreen, you lucky girl! He has piles of money and is handsome judging by his photographs. Almost any girl in the country would give her very soul to be in your shoes!"

Doreen was conscious of a little thrill.

"Is he famous? I didn't know."

Then a shiver of apprehension passed through her. The more famous he was, the more dangerous the future!

She ought to give him up. She had no right to marry him with that cloud upon her past. But she loved him. How she loved him! And he had told her to keep her secrets to herself.

"The past is your own. It is the future that must be all mine!" he had said to her.

Lilian flung away the end of her cigarette and yawning, began to undress.

"Well, I think you're very lucky!" she observed in a tone almost of vexation. "And you've me to thank for it. If you hadn't gone to Medhurst Hall you would never have met him. I would give up all my chances on the stage and Claude Moreton's money and everything else for the chance of marrying Richard Ashmore!"

Her lips tightened with annoyance as she turned away.

Since she and Doreen were so much alike Richard Ashmore would just as easily have fallen in love with her as with her cousin if they had had the luck to meet. She had not married Claude Moreton because she wanted to do so.

And there was the sinister figure of Charlie Winter in the background, whom she had allowed to inveigle her into an idiotic and disastrous marriage in those very early days when she was absolutely down and out, and who now lay sick, but resolutely refused to die and leave the way clear for her own advancement.

That was why she had had to vanish suddenly because they had told her that Charlie was on his deathbed. Now he was getting better again.

That was why she had insisted

upon keeping secret her marriage with Claude Moreton—for it was not really a marriage at all.

If Charlie Winter had died no one would ever know.

Discontentedly Lilian got into bed and drew up the covers above her ears, leaving her cousin to manage

as best she could on the uncomfortable sofa.

CHAPTER V.

Her wedding day! Doreen stood staring at the radiant vision that was herself in the long glass in the bedroom. Supple ivory white



Doreen stared at her cousin's agitated face with dilated eyes. "I fainted?" she repeated. "Why, I never faint! Why did I do that?"

velvet, soft as chiffon, fell in long gleaming folds to the floor; a cloud of tulle veil was fastened with a coronet of real orange blossoms in the bright waves of her hair. A string of milky, shimmering pearls hung about her neck—her bridegroom's present.

All the outfit had been his gift to her, because he wanted her to be the traditional bride.

"I want my bride in all her loveliness!" he had told her in low vibrating tones, and an icy little shiver had passed through her.

Then Doreen had set her teeth and summoned up all her courage. The past was dead, the past was gone. She was going to sweep it absolutely from her thoughts in the future.

Her married life, her love should not be tainted with any memory from Medhurst Hall. She would wipe it out from her mind, put it resolutely away from her. Henceforth her eyes should be fixed only upon the future.

So she smiled at her reflection now in the long mirror. She looked lovely and her heart sang for joy and gratitude. She was ten times more beautiful because Richard Ashmore thought her beautiful, because love had transfigured her life, like the flame in an alabaster lamp. The ceremony was to be very quiet in spite of her wedding finery.

Lilian, who had slipped back into her place at the theater, was here to help her to dress, but had refused to be present.

Doreen told herself that perhaps it was just as well. She had not found it necessary to explain her masquerade to her fiancé.

Probably now it never would be necessary. Immediately after the ceremony they were leaving for a honeymoon abroad.

"You had better hurry, Doreen. It won't do to keep Richard Ashmore waiting," Lilian laughed.

Doreen turned with a tremulous little laugh.

"I'm ready. Will I do? Do you think Richard will be pleased with me? Oh——" she broke off with a cry. Suddenly the room seemed to be swimming around her. Darkness came rushing at her, and she staggered, then collapsed suddenly, a crumpled little heap on the carpet.

When she opened her eyes again it was to find Lilian supporting her, holding a glass of water to her lips, looking anxious and agitated.

"You gave me such a fright," Lilian cried nervously. "You fainted!"

Doreen stared at her cousin's agitated face with dilated eyes.

"I fainted?" she repeated. "Why, I never faint! Why did I do that, Lilian?"

She tried to get to her feet again while her cousin supported her, but felt another dark surge rise up from the depths of her being.

The excitement of the whole thing had been too much for her. The work in the theater had been new and difficult and the nervous strain she had been under had taxed her strength to the utmost.

Lilian grabbed her by the shoulders and shook her. "Come on, Doreen. Buck up. You'll be all right as soon as the service is over." She hurried across the room and took a small flask from her bag and poured some of its contents into a glass. "Drink this," she ordered, pushing the glass into Doreen's trembling hand.

Doreen drank the brandy and in a few minutes began to feel better. "Oh, Lilian," she began, "I don't know what ails me, but I'm afraid to go on with this. Suppose that

Richard ever finds out that I was posing as you, using your name; he'll hate me!"

Lilian looked at her in bewilderment. If Doreen refused to go on, they would both be in a terrible mess.

"But, Doreen, don't be silly. He will never find it out and anyway if he really loves you he won't care. If you refuse to marry him you'll break his heart. You've given him your word and it's your duty to go on with your marriage. Pull yourself together. The car has been waiting downstairs for ages. I'll take you to the church and see you through it, even though I'm not dressed for a wedding. I'm going to put some rouge and lipstick on you and then you must come at once."

Hastily she rubbed a little color into Doreen's chalk-white cheeks and on her lips, so that a little semblance of life came back to her.

Then seizing her cousin by the arm, she half-dragged her down the stairs, past the smiling but curious maid and into the car that was waiting below.

Doreen allowed herself to be led and guided. She sat in the corner of the luxurious car in her wedding finery, staring out with wide unseeing eyes into the streets.

The car finally drew up outside a church.

"Pull yourself together!" whispered her cousin fiercely.

The chauffeur threw open the door and helped her out with Lilian supporting her on the other side.

As always happens when there is a wedding, a handful of onlookers had sprung up from nowhere. To Doreen they formed only an inanimate blur as she passed stiffly between them urged on by Lilian at her elbow, up the steps of the

church, and into the dimly lighted building.

Richard Ashmore with his dark, anxious face came toward her. His hands clasped hers in a warm, comforting, tender clasp.

Her heart seemed to turn over within her, the very sight of him kindled a warm glow where there had been only a frozen numbness.

She tried to open her mouth to speak, but no words would come from her parched lips.

Then they were passing down the aisle, toward the altar that was a mass of white flowers, lilies and branches of sweet-scented lilac, with tall waxen candles burning among them.

All this was for her, an outpouring of Richard's love for her.

How tall and splendid he was standing there beside her. She loved him and she could not give him up. She couldn't! She couldn't! She loved him too much.

If she was wronging him now, she would make up to him by the devotion she would give him in the future.

The white-haired clergyman was speaking the words of the marriage service now—those solemn, beautiful words that have brought a thrill of happiness to so many girls, but Doreen stood with white face and bowed head, a slim, drooping figure, like a lily bowed by storm and tempest.

"—if any there be that knows any cause or just impediment why these two should not be joined together in the bonds of holy matrimony, let him speak now or forever hold his peace."

A shiver passed through the girl's slim body. She felt her knees trembling, her limbs shaking so that she could hardly stand.

But the clergyman had barely

paused. His voice was going on. The moment had passed. It was now too late.

Richard Ashmore was making his responses. Then the clergyman put the usual questions to her and Doreen heard her own voice in response, as if it were a stranger's coming from far off.

Soon the ring was on her finger and she and the man she loved were kneeling together at the altar steps. The clergyman pronounced the benediction upon them.

She was Richard Ashmore's wife! The time for confession had passed and gone. Now she must forever after hold her peace!

TO BE CONTINUED.



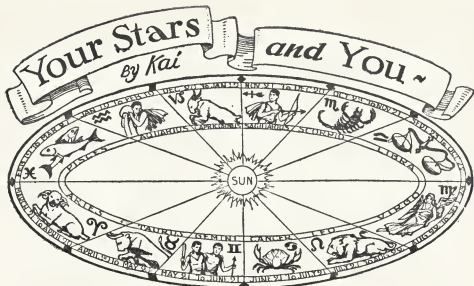
IN EVERY STRAIN OF MUSIC

IN every strain of music,
In every melody,
There is a thought, with rapture fraught,
Of bliss and love and thee.
Ecstatic soars the music,
Triumphant rings the song,
Across the ways of sunny days,
Where hopes and memories throng.

In every star that glitters,
In every flower I trace,
A loveliness whose tints express
Thy beauty, charm and grace.
I need no gift or picture
As symbol of thy love;
Within my heart, enshrined apart,
I hold you all above.

In other hearts will echo
The music of our own,
And its perfumes from tender blooms
Through other lives be blown.
Until devotion's incense
Is as a fragrant way,
Which onward winds until it finds
Love's dawn and golden day.

CLEMENT CALVERT.



YOUR WEEK

If you used your energies last week to inaugurate a schedule for yourself whereby you may capitalize on your abilities, the current week is favorable for continuing your activity and following your routine. The first part of the week is disrupting and may prove to be a dead spot from a standpoint of endeavor, due to the strongly emotional influences. The latter part of the week is constructive and should be used for making plans which may be carried to fulfillment during the middle of September. Your personal welfare and those dependent upon you will be the main consideration. Developments will transpire through outside agencies which will be for the general good. We are living our lives to-day on an upward trend, and competition is keen. You will have to put forth your shrewdest endeavor in order to progress, and it is the wise person who realizes his goal and uses each day to further his interests. Put the past behind you and look to the future. The majority of the people in the world have come down to earth and are considering concrete facts, and the general tendency is less toward a consideration of the emotional side of life but more emphasis laid on the practical side. If you expect to utilize your talent toward immediate advancement, you will have to get busy. The keynote for the week is—work.

DAY BY DAY

Hours mentioned are Eastern standard time

Saturday, August 29th $\frac{1}{2}$ Be careful of fraudulent dealings to-day and be prepared for unexpected happenings.

There is a morbid trend to-day, and you will accomplish more until three p. m. by following routine and performing duties. The day as a whole is productive of discontentment and nervousness, and the hours are unsatisfactory if your interest lies in social and pleasure matters.

Sunday, August 30th



The hours until noon will be the most enjoyable part of to-day. Try to occupy your mind with serious matters and avoid restlessness and sudden decisions. The late evening hours are disturbing and restless. The less you concentrate on emotional matters and act according to your feelings, the happier you will be.

Monday, August 31st



Here is another unsatisfactory day. Force yourself to perform duties and unpleasant tasks until two p. m. There will be delays and disappointments during the morning hours, and the general trend of the day is unsettled. Act with caution and control your temper, especially between two o'clock in the afternoon and seven p. m. The evening hours are the best part of the day and may be used for artistic interests, affairs of the heart, entertainment, and amusement.

Tuesday,
September
1st

♊

To-day we have clear sailing, and the pressure of the past few days will be lifted perceptibly. Use the influences to lift yourself above the depressing undertone to your affairs which has prevailed. We do not get as much accomplished under favorable planetary positions as we do under unfavorable ones, but we feel better, and if you have used the past three days constructively, your way will be opened to-day for results. The evening hours are very favorable.

days is not a favorable time for those born between April 5th and 14th to start new enterprises, and this group should be very cautious with their finances, in dealing with members of families, and in protecting their health; do not make drastic changes unless it is absolutely necessary, and see that you do not allow your temper to involve you in disputes or litigation. The period is favorable and expansive if born between March 29th and April 3rd; use your energy for productive results to yourself.

April 20th and May 21st

(Taurus ♉)

—most of you Taureans are under excellent influences, except those born between April 28th and May 5th. This group born near the first part of May must not exert their muscular system in excessive activities and should see that their circulation is kept at normal condition; also, side-step legal tangles and avoid extravagance. Those born between May 5th and May 16th are in line for changes, original ideas, new methods, and constructive living; this is a favorable time for travel, study, research work, active endeavor, and for adjusting matters which have offered complications in the past. Those born the last week in April will find the current seven days pleasant, inspirational, intuitive, and adaptable for emotional affairs and social activities.

Wednesday,
September
2nd

♋

Handle important affairs during the morning hours, seek interviews, trade, sell, and pursue business interests. This is an aggressive, active, and important day and is adaptable to your plans. The evening hours are stable and most constructive; clear up misunderstandings and settle problems. Make your plans for a good day to-morrow.

May 21st and June 21st

(Gemini ♊)

—the Gemini people born between June 8th and 13th are in line for journeys, productive ideas, active enterprise, new business, creative ideas, advantageous removals, and new conditions of living. This is an expansive period, with financial gain and new opportunities for those who were born between May 29th and June 4th, but the expansion should not be demonstrated through the emotions; concentrate on business and do not expect your personal life to be as satisfactory as you might wish.

Thursday,
September
3rd

♋

You will have to use to-day according to the dictates of your own judgment. The influences are favorable for you to do with as you will, and the evening hours are expansive and adaptable to handling financial matters, social interests, and contact with your fellow men, also favorable for adjusting domestic problems and planning for the future.

June 21st and July 21st

(Cancer ♋)

—the planetary positions have improved to such an extent that you Cancer, Libra, Capricorn, and Aries people have been relieved of the utter hopelessness which prevailed in your lives during the first part of this year, due to the cross opposition of planets in the heavens. This continues to be a difficult period for the Cancerians born between July 8th and 14th, and the time is unfavorable for concentration upon

Friday,
September
4th

♋

To-day is negative until five p. m.; nervous and active around the dinner hour; expansive and usable for social, artistic, and emotional matters during the evening until midnight. By "negative" I mean you will have to use caution in all your dealings.

IF YOU WERE BORN BETWEEN—

March 21st and April 20th

(Aries ♈)

—you Aries people lead active lives and are constantly starting new ventures and pursuing new interests. The current seven

adjusting problems concerned with finances, domestic troubles, and emotional upheavals; try to be patient with conditions for a little longer. The Cancer people born between June 25th and 30th and during the first week in July—until the 5th—are due for a more expansive period and a lifting of the pressure which has been exerted in important phases of your existence; use this time to readjust yourself and for making new plans for a happier existence.

July 21st and August 22nd
(Leo ♌)

—the majority of you Leo people are under excellent planetary conditions and should exert yourselves to take advantage of this good period in your lives. Those under particularly favorable influences were born between August 1st and 5th and between August 8th and 16th; you may travel, enter new business, make changes, and expect personal satisfaction from the intimate conditions in your lives.

August 22nd and September 23rd
(Virgo ♍)

—there is nothing spectacular about the planetary conditions, but with the general expansion in daily affairs, you should profit according to your individual efforts. There is a confused, chaotic condition present if born between August 27th and the 31st, and you should not allow yourselves to base your activity on emotional reactions alone; there will be a discontented and restless feeling present, and your judgment is not too reliable at this time. Many of the Virgo folks are salespeople and writers, and the general influences are favorable for creative thinking, writing, and planning.

September 23rd and October 22nd
(Libra ♎)

—the Librans are under fairly good influences, except those born between October 8th and 16th; make no important decisions, if avoidable. The conditions are particularly favorable if born between September 27th and October 4th.

October 22nd and November 21st
(Scorpio ♏)

—favorable influences are in force for the Scorpio people. This is an active, energetic, and definite period in the lives of those born between November 7th and 13th, and the current week is good for action in every department of your lives. The tendency for you who have birthdays between October 26th and 31st is toward

artistic appreciation, sociability, emotional interests, and pleasant experiences.

November 21st and December 20th
(Sagittarius ♐)

—you Sagittarians are under most favorable conditions, except those who were born between November 24th and December 5th; this group should use its best judgment in living and in handling business details. The influences are excellent if born between December 8th and 14th, and you should act, plan, and promote according to the conditions which will enable you to capitalize on this successful period in your lives.

December 20th and January 19th
(Capricorn ♑)

—there are more favorable conditions for the Capricornians, except for you who were born between January 6th and 12th, and these folks will have to use caution, patience, and prudence, avoiding erratic action and morbid consideration of their affairs. You are under favorable influences, compared to the restriction you have experienced during the past two years, if born between December 25th and 31st, and you may proceed with more freedom in adjusting your plan of living.

January 19th and February 19th
(Aquarius ♒)

—there is a lack of spectacular results for most of the Aquarians during the current seven days, except those who were born between February 5th and 12th, and those folks should take advantage of all opportunities and new channels of activity. Be careful of health and finances and avoid legal entanglements if born between January 28th and February 3rd.

February 19th and March 21st
(Pisces ♓)

—the current period is nervous, upsetting, and chaotic for the Pisceans who have birthdays between February 22nd and 28th, and you should avoid upsetting conditions as much as possible, protect your diet, and do not allow yourself to become a part of action whereby you would put yourself in line for criticism, maybe scandal. The influences are particularly favorable for you folks who were born between March 7th and 13th, and while you will be inclined to worry about petty details during the current seven days, there is an undertone of stability, new ideas, new contacts, and a constructive trend to all your affairs.

FAMOUS PEOPLE BORN UNDER THE SIGN VIRGO

Rex Beach.

Louis XIV of France.

General John Joseph Pershing.

CHART FOR OPERATIONS

September, 1931

Eastern standard time

September 1st—Moon in Aries until four three p. m.; avoid head, eye, inflammatory, and brain operations. After that, in Taurus; see September 2nd.

September 2nd—Moon in Taurus all day; avoid throat, ear, and neck operations.

September 3rd—Moon in Taurus all day; see the 2nd.

September 4th—Moon enters the sign Gemini at three forty-seven a. m. and remains in that sign all day; see the 5th.

September 5th—Moon in Gemini all day; a dual sign; operations would have to be repeated.

September 6th—Moon in Gemini until noon; see the 5th; after that, in Cancer.

September 7th—Moon in Cancer all day; avoid operations on breast and stomach.

September 8th—Moon in Cancer until five p. m.; see the seventh. After that, in Leo; see the 9th.

September 9th—Moon in Leo all day; avoid heart, back, and blood operations.

September 10th—Moon in Leo until six ten p. m.; see the 9th. After that, in Virgo.

September 11th—Moon in Virgo all day; a dual sign; avoid all operations, especially for nervous or intestinal operations. An operation to-day would have to be repeated.

September 12th—Moon in Virgo until five fifty p. m.; see the 11th. After that, in Libra; see the 13th.

September 13th—Moon in Libra all day; avoid kidney, stone, and gravel operations.

September 14th—Moon in Libra until five forty-five p. m.; see the 13th. After that, in Scorpio.

September 15th—Moon in Scorpio all day; avoid operations on appendix and regenerative organs.

September 16th—Moon in Scorpio until seven forty-five p. m.; see the 15th. After that, in Sagittarius.

September 17th—Moon in Sagittarius all day; a dual sign; avoid all operations, especially those of hips, bowels, and feverish conditions; operations would have to be repeated.

September 18th—Moon in Sagittarius until midnight; see the 17th.

September 19th—Moon in Capricorn all day; favorable for all operations if necessary.

September 20th—Moon in Capricorn all day; see the 19th.

September 21st—Moon in Capricorn until nine twenty-two a. m.; see the 19th. After that, in Aquarius; see the 22nd.

September 22nd—Moon in Aquarius all day; good for all operations, if necessary, except for gravel, stone, or blood.

September 23rd—Moon in Aquarius all day until eight thirty-three p. m.; see the 22nd. After that, in Pisces. The Sun enters the sign Libra at seven twenty-seven p. m. to-day.

September 24th—Moon in Pisces all day; a dual sign; avoid all operations, especially foot and sex; operation would have to be repeated.

September 25th—Moon in Pisces all day; see the 24th.

September 26th—Moon in Pisces until nine thirteen a. m. After that, in Aries; see the 27th.

September 27th—Moon in Aries all day; avoid head, eye, inflammatory, and brain operations.

September 28th—Moon in Aries all day until ten ten p. m.; see the 27th. After that, in Taurus; see the 29th.

September 29th—Moon in Taurus all day; avoid throat, ear, and neck operations.

September 30th—Moon in Taurus all day; see the 29th.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
★ THE STAR QUESTION BOX ★
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Miss A., born August 11, 1913, at twelve thirty a. m., Pennsylvania: By the time you read this answer you will have made a change for the better, both mentally and materially. You will have had opportunities presented to you that will be worth while, if you took advantage of them. October will be a good month for you, especially around the middle of the month.

Miss P. W., born April 8, 1911, ten p. m., Ohio: I know things have been very difficult, and 1931 will end this unsatisfactory period you have been experiencing for the past four years. You have initiative and ability to follow it up with perseverance, and do not blame yourself for not having been able to accomplish as much as you would have liked to during 1931. I think

stenography is preferable for you, because your chart indicates active work executed through the use of the hands. You are quite capable of holding an executive position, and you should be engaged in some capacity where there is a phase of his business interests. The year 1932 will bring better conditions under which you may accomplish a great deal, and by 1933 you will begin to reap the harvest of your efforts.

Mrs. G. W. H., born March 9, 1909, Georgia, time unknown: It is difficult for me to answer you, Mrs. H.; but I feel, from the general positions in your chart, the move you are contemplating to the West coast is inadvisable. You will have to contend with the financial restrictions surrounding you and your husband in your present locality until the end of 1931. I suggest you take every precaution regarding your health. Do not worry about financial limitations any more than you can help, because that is the situation in your life which is worrisome, according to the planets' positions in your chart for this year, and, naturally, this is affecting your health. Stay where you are. The condition would exist, no matter where you locate, until the spring of 1932.

Mrs. E. E. S., born October 4, 1909, New Jersey, eight thirty a. m.: I wonder if you acquired your knowledge about the Fire and Water signs from my department in this magazine. You seem to have a working knowledge of astrology from the layman's standpoint, and it is not surprising to me that you and your fiancé get along together, because the Ascendant in your chart forms a trine to six planets in his chart in Water signs. This gives an emotional contact which would overcome material complications in a time of crisis. I believe you when you say he loves you. There is enough of a foundation to warrant marriage, because there is much in your contact of a friendly nature which would carry you through difficulties. You have been under influences of the planets which are not entirely pleasant in your relationship with men, and you will not be released from these conditions until the end of 1931. I do not advise against the marriage, and I feel you have a degree of happiness ahead of you, and by 1932, if you feel you want to marry this man, it is O. K. according to your charts.

Mrs. H. R. I., born September 20, 1897, nine p. m., South Carolina: If you were

born on September 20, 1897, you were born on Monday, not Sunday. I am afraid I have very little patience with the husband who allows a woman outside his marriage to break up the companionship between himself and his wife. Your husband, in my opinion, was most inconsiderate in not extending his sympathy, at least when you were ill with as serious a sickness as typhoid-pneumonia. I cannot feel that his emotions under such stringent circumstances justify your feeling that he loves you. Nevertheless, I shall have to allow the marriage problem to remain in your hands. You will have to make your own decision. There are indications of constructive, favorable influences in your life in December of this year. This could mean a reconciliation, but I feel such a renewal of contact between yourself and your husband would prove disappointing, according to the astrological influences in your chart. Your letter indicates to me that you are interested in business, and, if I were you, I should be prepared to take advantage of opportunities for myself in December, 1931. If it becomes necessary, be reconciled to the fact that you will have to forget your husband temporarily. Be thankful you have your profession and a good position and that you are enjoying your work. Probably this is your solution, but I shall not make your decision for you. All I can say is that your business prospects ahead look promising.

ANSWERS TO STUDENTS

D. B., born January 9, 1892, Alabama, about five p. m.: As a student, I feel I can be technical with you. Of course, you know that you have the Sun in nineteen degrees of Capricorn, and you also know that the planet Uranus is stationary in a square position to your Sun during the month of September, and has been during July and August. Uranus again squares your Sun in April, 1932. To add to the discomfort of this changeful, disrupting planet's influence, you also have the underlying restrictions of the planet Saturn. Saturn conjuncted your Sun in February of this year, again in July, and will reach this critical degree of nineteen degrees of Capricorn again in November, 1931. I do not have to tell you that this is the time for changes in the routine in your life and that it is no time for marriage. Naturally, you are feeling the urge to adjust your emotional life and to take on the responsibilities of marriage, because of Saturn's influence. The Uranian influence promotes the desire for change. I like the chart of

the man you send me—born July 30, 1880—but when I tell you that he has the planet Jupiter in nineteen degrees of Aries in the fifth house of his birth chart you will understand that the planetary positions are directing your affairs and his, where the emotions are concerned. I cannot see where it is possible for you to adjust your love interest at this time. Furthermore, there is not an ironbound contact between the two charts which I would consider highly favorable, but there is a definite bond between you. The man is under excellent influences from the planets this fall, and some of these indications point toward marriage. The year 1932 is quite favorable for you. If the opportunity for marriage next year comes, take it. The other man you speak of who is identified with your past will go out of your life. Try not to become embittered. This is a natural impulse for you because of your strong Capricornian qualities; Capricornians have a difficult time to avoid becoming self-centered and pessimistic. Take your problems astrologically—this requires scientific intelligence—and philosophically. Adopt a constructive attitude. Do not brood and do not feel abused—these squares and oppositions challenge your real worth. Project your mind to the optimistic and hopeful circumstances of 1932. The future is your best bet. As for your profession, I can appreciate your capabilities for teaching. Your chart indicates this. The only suggestion I might make as a substitute for teaching is the executive handling of any work which deals with the public, such as catering, the restaurant business, or an occupation where you will deal with women or children. The students who read this department know that I am deeply interested in the observations and letters of those of you who are familiar with the fundamentals of astrology.

I was very glad to hear from you, F. S. McG., born August 27, 1899, Illinois, four-twenty a. m., and, as far as I am concerned, you do not have to wait until you learn more about astrology before you write to me again. I enjoyed your interesting and chatty letter very much. Do not mind writing me lengthy communications; the longer they are the better I like them. You are not the only one beginning the study of astrology who thinks he is "dumb." Keep at it. You will find it valuable. It is not very often that I give a suggestion such as I am writing you. The suggestion is this: You will progress more rapidly if you eliminate the opinion of your husband when his opinion conflicts with your better judgment. He has not shown very much character or manliness in allowing his family to interfere with your personal lives. The twentieth-century attitude toward drinking is not a point upon which I am prejudiced, but the information contained in your letter concerning the drunkenness of your husband does not appeal to me as a hopeful indication for the future. If I were you, I would work my ideas out in anticipation of a happier existence. I am of the opinion your marriage partner has proved himself unworthy of your finer character, and if I were you I would not become obsessed with ideals and loyalties which have not worked out and which look hopeless. You have a very good chart for the study of astrology, and I suggest you continue. When Jupiter enters the sign Leo and conjuncts Venus, Mercury, and the Ascendant, in trine relationship to your Saturn, this will bring an improved condition in the routine of living and will automatically expand your viewpoint to include a rejuvenated outlook upon life. You were released from the pressure of circumstances in May of this year. Look to the future with hope; write me again.

Editor's Note: Questions for this department are answered only through *Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine*. Each reader is allowed to ask one question. Be sure to give the following data in your letter: date, month, year, and place of birth, the hour of the day or night, if possible, and sex. Address your letters to KAI, care of this magazine.





The Friendliest Corner

By MARY MORRIS

Miss Morris will help you to
make friends



Miss Mary Morris, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Morris will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. Please sign your name and address when writing. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Friendliest Corner, so that mail can be forwarded.

Address Miss Mary Morris, Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

HERE'S life for you! Half a world away, in one of the most mysterious and fascinating countries on the earth, John Bull taps out his wireless messages of life, death, and naval strategy. He's part of another nation, another navy, living in the midst of another civilization. John Bull will bring you the sea, the Orient, the tense drama of telegraphy, the Englishman's viewpoint, and with it his friendship, honest, lasting, and sincere.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a boy of twenty-four, a wireless operator in the British navy, serving at present in Hongkong, China. It's very lonely here, and I'd be grateful for Pen Pals. I'm five feet nine inches tall, weigh one hundred and seventy pounds, and you boys will find me interested in all sports. I'm waiting for letters!

JOHN BULL.

A Pal with the stir of martial music in his blood.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy of fifteen, a good musician, and a member of a

boys' band in Detroit. I'd certainly like to make new friends through your Corner. I'm interested in sports, reading, and music, and promise to answer all letters immediately.

JOHN OF THE BAND.

Why not give her a glimpse of your home town?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a widow of twenty-five, and love books, scenery, sewing, and music. My hobby is collecting post cards, and I hope you'll all add to my picture gallery.

GOLDIE OF MICHIGAN.

Help her pass the hospital hours.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Who'll write to a Santa Rosa girl? I'm a hospital patient and am making a scrapbook of post cards from all cities and countries, so won't you Pals please send me one from your city? Girls, I'll appreciate your friendship.

CALIFORNIA MARGIE.

She's ready with real loyalty.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a married woman of forty-two, and would love to get letters from women who'd be lasting friends. I have lots of time to devote to my Pals, and will surely stick through thick and thin.

MAE FROM JERSEY.

Artists, put aside your easels and pick up your pens.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy, twenty-five, with blond hair and blue eyes. I do oil painting, and like to write and receive interesting letters. Boys, won't you let me hear from you?

ST. LOUIS ARTIST.

Step into life in the suburbs.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm just an ordinary girl of twenty-two, living in a small Connecticut town, a suburb of New York City. I'd like to travel, and perhaps I will some day, but just now I'd be glad to hear from people all over the world, the farther away the better.

CONNECTICUT DEB.

A romance that does not wane.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of twenty-seven, have been married nine years and am still on my honeymoon. I never aim to grow up. My banjo is my pet, and I love music and all sports. I'm jolly and full of fun, so please try me, young and old, far and near.

A FIFTY-FIFTY GIRL.

The thrill of long-distance flying.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a lonely Canadian boy and would be grateful if some other men would write to me, especially those who are fond of things artistic. I'm an aviator and have traveled quite a bit back in Europe and Canada. Boys, let's get off to a flying start.

LADDIE.

Girls, bring modern youth to a little shut-in modernist.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Have you room in your Corner for a girl twenty-one years old, who used to be a flapper? Last December I was in an automobile accident and lost the use of my legs. It will only be for a year more, the doctors say, but I sure do miss my dancing. One of my hobbies is collecting postmarks, so come on every one and write to

A ONE-TIME FLAPPER.

Speed your letter to the twin Southern Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: We're twins, a boy and a girl, eighteen years old, living about

twelve miles from Mobile. Elvin would like to hear from boys interested in sports, travel, and music, while Elvine would enjoy letters from girls interested in everything. Pals, don't forget this two-in-one pair.

ELVIN AND ELVINE.

Spin yarns with a sailor.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm just a poor lonely sailor boy looking for friends. I'm twenty-four years old, have had Asiatic service, and have been up and down both the East and West coasts. I'd like to swap yarns of the sea for those of the landlubbers.

GILLY, THE GOB.

Boys, here's some one to tell your troubles to.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: If any of you Pals are lonely, out of work, ill, trying to forget some one or something, or even if you only wish to talk over your ambitions, why don't you drop me a line? I'm a boy, but I'm sympathetic, and I've found that it is much easier to write down our troubles or hopes to a Pal than to explain face to face. Come on; I'm waiting to hear from every one!

ONE-HUNDRED-PER-CENT PAL.

Live her trip through the Rockies.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a Canadian girl, living in Ontario, hoping for friends everywhere. I'm going to take a motor tour through the Rocky Mountains and British Columbia, and would like to tell my Pals all about it.

MAPLE LEAF.

Choose a Pal from old Virginia.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy of twenty-eight, six feet tall, with dark hair and blue eyes. I'd like to join your Corner. I'm interested in all kinds of sports, as well as dancing and music. Won't some one please write to me? I live in the beautiful Shenandoah Valley.

LONESOME BUDDY.

Girls, get your ray of Florida sunshine.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I want Pals from everywhere. I'm a dependable and interesting writer, a woman of thirty, short, with dark-brown hair and eyes. I have two small boys, and I'm a Northerner, but we

have lived in the Florida "Sunshine City" seven years. I sure hope you Pals will send me a line.
MABEL.

A big blond swimmer in the richest county in New York.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man twenty-two years old, six feet tall, with ash-blond hair. I'm a swimming instructor in Westchester County. I'm very broad-minded, and would be glad to have Pals write me. I promise interesting letters in return, so how about it, boys?

WALLY.

A big-city girl, pining for the country.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'd love to have friends from all over, especially those who live on ranches or farms. I'm a young working girl from Chicago. That's all I'm going to tell you. Write and learn the rest!

CHICAGO MYSTERY.

Write to a Pal who's ready for anything.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: If any one wants to write to a red-headed girl, here I am! I'm interested in everything, even enjoy scrubbing floors, and adore sports. Come on, young and old, sad and glad; I can sympathize with all of you.

EVERYBODY'S TRUE PAL.

A Pal with the spirit of adventure.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy of sixteen, with dark-brown eyes and jet-black curly hair. I've traveled a great deal in Italy and Spain, and while in Italy I had some exciting adventures in the Alps. I'm interested in radio and aviation, and my ambition is to be a real aviator some day. Boys, let's look for excitement together!

AVIATOR ALF.

A native of a much-discussed island.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I don't know why a sound, healthy, eighteen-year-old Illinois boy should be lonely, but I am. I'm a boy who's very fond of running, handball, swimming, and chinning, and am an ardent movie fan. Who wants to hear about the Philippines?

MARS.

You're sure of an answer from him.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Will you please get me some Pen Pals between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-four or under or over—it really doesn't matter. I want them all to write, and I'll answer every letter, long or short. Come on, boys!

FRANK OF TACONY.

The most historic places in the land.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl eighteen years old, with dark hair, brown eyes, and a medium complexion. I love to dance, have lots of friends and want more. I live near the capitol of the United States and also Mount Vernon, so come on, Pals, and write to

BABY LEE.

She'll write to the rhythm of the latest tap dance.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a seventeen-year-old high-school girl, tall, with black curly hair, blue eyes, and a fair complexion. I love tennis, golf, and swimming. I also tap dance and play the piano and saxophone. Every one write to me; I guarantee a reply.

DOTTY SMILES.

Uncle Sam's sons in an exotic land.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: We are three lonesome soldiers stationed in far-off Hawaii, and would like to correspond with some Pals from the States. Frank is blond and twenty-three, Joseph is nineteen and dark, while Ralph is twenty-three. We sure would appreciate hearing from all you pen pushers back in the good old States.

THREE SOLDIERS.

Share her secret of popularity.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl twenty-one years old, with long, wavy brown hair and blue eyes. I love swimming, skating, and dancing, play the uke, and am considered the life of the party when I play and sing. Come on, Pals; write to the it girl from Pennsylvania.

ANNA MAYER.

Boys, find the key to his personality.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm twenty years old. A boy who loves life. Any one who

writes will find me a very unique, strange, but interesting correspondent, a real friend and Pal to all. Boys, please write to
E. M. O.

A wealthy girl in a wealthy crowd.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a sophisticated, wealthy girl of fifteen, a sophomore in high school, and I have chestnut hair and brown eyes. I'm fond of tennis, golf, swimming, traveling, and dancing, run around with the younger set in my city, but would like to get acquainted with outside girls in other places. Don't forget me, Pals!

CALIFORNIA KATE.

Make friends with a home woman.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Have you room in the Friendliest Corner for a young married woman, twenty-four years old? I have a little boy three years old, and like to read, write letters and drive. I have a number of interesting Pen Pals, but would like more. Folks, write me a letter. I'm waiting to hear from every State in the Union.

A HAPPY HOME MAKER.

Follow the thrills of his college education.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy of nineteen, a sophomore in college and a movie fan. I'm curious to know what fellows in other places think of our movies, and I'd like to talk things over. Any one who's a picture fan, as well as any one who isn't, will find a real Pal in me.

ARKANSAS TOM.

She's seen the cities where society recuperates

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a lonely fifteen-year-old girl, interested in sports and poetry, with the ambition to become a nurse. I've traveled a great deal, and just came to Reno, Nevada, from Miami by automobile. I'll write you interesting letters, girls, if you'll only give me a chance.

GIRL OF RENO.

Here's a girl who loves activity.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: To look at me, one would think letter writing my last thought, but I really like it, and hope the Corner will give me plenty of practice. I'm a girl of twenty, and enjoy horseback riding,

sailing, canoeing, and what not. I'm a reformed artist, promise interesting letters, and hope to hear from England to China and back again.

MISS GREEN EYES.

Close to the breezes of Long Island Sound.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I sure would like to join your Corner. I'm a widow, living in New London, Connecticut, and would enjoy corresponding with women between the ages of thirty-five and fifty-five. Won't everybody write? It would mean so much to me.

NUTMEG EDITH.

Boys, write to a musical New Yorker.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm an American fellow of twenty-eight, living in one of New York's greatest boroughs. I'm a singer, and hope every boy interested in music or the navy will write to me. I'm fond of tennis, and would certainly appreciate real friendship.

STATEN ISLAND BILL.

Dramatic to her finger tips!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's a plea to all girls who like to write letters and find it exciting to receive them. I'm a girl of fourteen, have brown hair and blue eyes, and love travel and mystery. I'm interested in movies, dramatics, and stage dancing, and hope to go on the stage. Isn't anybody going to write to me? MIDGE.

She sticks to life's quiet pleasures.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm right in line for Pen Pals, a married woman thirty-five years old, with a young son of four. I enjoy my home, fancy work, and taking care of my little boy. Who wants to hear from the Poppy State? Every one who writes will surely get an answer.

CALIFORNIA TOPSY.

Married women, sit down for a pleasant chat.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here I am, a Syracuse woman coming into the Corner with an appeal for Pals, especially those around the age of thirty-five. I'm interested in everything and everybody, and hope to hear from all of you. Pals, don't forget

A WORKINGMAN'S WIFE.

Her friendship leaves no room for loneliness.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of twenty, with dark wavy hair and large gray eyes, and I work in a grocery store out in good old Arkansas. I'm interested in exciting things, can cook, have lots of friends, but there's room in my heart for lots more. I'll answer all letters, and tell every one all I know about groceries.

TINY.

A woman who needs happiness.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't you get me some Pen Pals? I'm a married woman, thirty-five years old, have a little girl and two boys, but am far away from my parents. Won't some one take pity on a poor lonesome woman out West? I'll be a faithful friend.

A. C. D.

For boys who'll give sincerity along with their friendship.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy of twenty, interested in dancing, swimming, and skating. I make friends easily, but have found they're not true friends. Boys, won't you show me real loyalty?

FRANK OF EVERETT.

She'll adapt herself to every need.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: This is a plea for a correspondent from a girls' girl, happy, jolly, carefree nineteen. If you Pals need inspiration, encouragement, sympathy, diversion, or amusement you'll find it in my letters, and they are yours for the asking. I'm interested in everything, every one, everywhere.

AS YOU LIKE IT.

See the West through Western Mae's eyes.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a middle-aged widow who would like to hear from "girls" between forty and fifty. I like music and some outdoor sports. I get rather lonesome when I have to stay indoors; so, Pals, won't you write?

WESTERN MAE.

She'll show you places you've never seen.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a twenty-one-year-old girl asking for friendship. I stay

at home, but love to read, dance, skate, and swim. Come on, you modern maidens, and write to a lonesome girl who's traveled a bit and can tell interesting things of different places.

CLAIRE OF CLEVELAND.

Let him help you with your business career.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man in my twenties, sincerely hoping that I'll be deluged with letters from Pals. I've finished college, and am starting out in the business world as a stenographer and secretary. I'd like to hear from other boys trying to get ahead.

DOUG OF WACO.

Boys, make a movie stars' friend your own.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a man living out in the blue hills of California, a female impersonator and acrobatic dancer. I'm known to many of the movie stars, and will answer any question you fellows would like to ask. Let's get going.

R. K. O.

Bachelors, find a man's pleasures with Ivan.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a Californian, hoping to hear from other Californians as well as men all over the country. I'm a lonely bachelor, thirty years old and blond. Men, let's start our friendship right away.

IVAN.

A stay-at-home adventurer.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a Texas boy, working in a small town, but all the time I'm longing to be free to go as I will. Since I can't do that, I'm interested in the next best thing—writing to Pals in other places. I promise prompt, steady replies. Boys, won't you write to me?

HOME-TOWN RAMBLER.

Why not join forces with two wholesome, happy girls.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: We're two high-school girls from a small town in Connecticut. Helen is sixteen and Olga is fifteen, but we both have the same tastes, with souvenir collecting, swimming, hiking, dancing, and movies as our favorites. Every one who writes will surely get a long, friendly reply.

HELEN AND OLGA.

The Friend In Need

Department

CONDUCTED BY

Laura Alston Brown



THERE is an old saying that youth seeks youth. Doubtless this is true in romance, but how about marriage? Do the young girls of to-day who enjoy dancing and sharing other diversions with young men of their own age think of them as prospective husbands?

The modern girl of to-day is far more sophisticated than the girl of ten years ago. Quite naturally, she turns to a more mature mind for companionship. Young women of to-day realize that the reckless abandon of youth and wild good times are not enough upon which to build a solid marriage.

Then, too, the younger man is inclined to be more impatient and hot-headed, despite the romance he may inspire. The older man has a greater perspective on life and what it means, is more understanding, and knows a woman's nature much better than the younger man.

Which should a girl choose? What should be the age difference between a girl and a young man? Should they be of the same age? Should a girl of twenty-one marry a man of thirty-two?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: For the past six months I have been engaged to Ralph, who is eleven years older than I, and most of my friends have been harping on the subject of our ages, saying that he is too old for me.

We love each other, Mrs. Brown, and get along so well that I am never conscious Ralph is older than I. He is jolly and young in his ways and is interested in everything that a younger man would be.

I've been engaged before, but when I compare Ralph with Dick, who is just a year older than I am, there is certainly a great difference. Dick was so jealous that I couldn't even dance with any of my friends when we were out. Ralph likes to see me enjoy myself, although he dances, too. He is never impatient with me, and is thoughtful and considerate.

Ralph has never been engaged before, because he has a sick mother to take care of and has not had much time to spare for girls and good times. He took an engineering course, and now has a fine job and the future looks good. I know I should have everything I want—everything within reason, of course—if I marry him.

My folks are very fond of Ralph and think he is a fine man. Is he too old for me? Do you think we could be happy? It would break my heart to give him up.

Puzzled Alice.

But why give him up and break your heart? No, I don't think he is too old for you, and if you two really love each other, I am sure that real happiness is in store for you.

Deep down in every person's heart is a craving for peaceful, intimate, and lasting companionship in the home. Women, perhaps, are more instinctive and intuitive and feel this more than men. A woman is apt to feel safer with an older man in her choice of a life partner, and prefer a man who is more settled

and no longer goes goofy over every new face that he meets, a man who realizes the seriousness of life.

Since Ralph is O. K. and a fine man, liked by your family and loved by you, let nothing stop you. Go ahead and marry him, dear, and my best wishes for your happiness.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am trying to tell Not a Fool But Experienced a few things that I happen to know about some of the things these so called-modern girls do. First, I think that a girl knows the difference between right and wrong. Of course, there are some exceptions to the rule. But if a girl smokes or drinks, I think it's nobody's business but her own, unless she is married or her parents forbid it. But, on the whole, she may try to do the things that she sees some one else do. The modern girl can take care of herself in every way, and certainly can hold her own, and be just as good as the next one.

Then again she may not. For I am sorry to say I have seen some poor examples. There is a limit to everything, and a man generally will go as far as a girl will let him. So don't blame the men for causing the downfall of so many girls. Some girls wonder how they can be popular, or have a lot of menfolk. Well, it's the same old story told over and over again; any girl can hold or have a man if she goes about it the right way. A girl who can keep a man guessing is not likely to lose him as soon as one who doesn't, and in this day and age one has to use the brain the Lord gave him, and all the advice in the world won't help one bit.

Now to get down to this good-name stuff. I wonder who helps us ruin our good name? Nine times out of ten the person with a bad name is trying very hard to live up to it. And is as good as the person or persons who help to damage him or her, as the case may be. It is surprising how quick one can lose his good name without doing the least bit of wrong. You certainly cannot stop people from thinking. And they'll think what they please about you. If a Mrs. Smith happens to go out with a Mr. Jones, or, for instance, they meet at lunch or dinner, and in order to be polite they share each other's company for the time of the meal, let some narrow-minded person see them together! I can bet without a doubt that there will be a rumor in no time. I am sorry I had to put the matter in this

way, but I think that it is the only way it can be fixed for you to see it clearly.

JUST A READER.

The reputation of a person is like his or her shadow. Sometimes it follows and sometimes precedes. Conventions may hold us tied but they are for our protection, and they hold such strong weight that it is usually injurious to fight against them.

You assert that any girl can hold a man if she goes about it the right way. Many of us would like to have this statement explained more fully, and in detail. Have any of you new ideas on the subject? If so, shoot! Suggestions are in order.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have just finished reading the latest Love Story Magazine. I am truly disgusted with Unbeliever. From Unbeliever's letter you would suppose he, or she was about the age of seven or eight years. Just imagine the question, "What is love?" Well, I'll give you a fine definition. Love is an outward demonstration of inward foolishness. Oh, yes, you knew that. Well, why did you ask? Now let me tell you of my experience with love.

When I was sixteen years old I met and fell in "love" with a wonderful man twenty-one years old. When I was seventeen I married him with my parents' consent, but neither of them really liked him. The first year our baby was born. She died at the age of six months. The second year our second daughter was born in January. In February of the third year he said he was going to leave. Meanwhile, he had left me three different times, but always came back crying and begging me to give him another chance. I did, three times in three years. I still thought I loved him, but I was not surprised when he told me he was leaving for the fourth time.

By this time I was truly disgusted, so I told him not to come back again. I also told him he need never try to see our daughter, as he was not a fit father for her. Well, he finally left. In May I filed suit for divorce and custody of our baby. I received my decree in June. The following winter, after the expiration of seven months, I was married to the finest man ever created. Now we have a baby son twenty months old. He does not show partiality between my daughter and our son. He treats them both alike. He never

leaves for work without a good-by kiss. When he comes home from work I meet him at the door with a smile and a kiss.

Do I nag? Never! I hate a nagger. I appreciate my husband's love and I'm sure he appreciates my love, for he fairly worships me. I always have his meals on time; keep my house clean and help him in every way I can. I love my second husband so much I don't see how I could possibly have ever thought I loved my first man.

Do I believe in love? I sure do. You are missing the biggest thing in life when you miss love. I had a chance to marry a fellow with lots of money, but I didn't because I didn't love him. Do I like flappers? Yes, sir! I was one. Why shouldn't I? Did I drink? A little. Did I smoke? Yes, a few times. Did I pet? Yes, quite often. Do I do that now? No, I'm married. I love my man. I am true to him, regardless of where I am, or what I do or what comes up. I trust him anywhere with any one and he trusts me. I would not destroy that trust for all the money in the world.

When I hear a boy raving against the flappers I fairly go crazy. These boys who say they won't marry a flapper are the very ones who do. Boys make mistakes, so do girls, but you don't hear girls going around saying I won't marry So and So, he is a sheik. They take the fellow they love, regardless of what he is.

Well, Unbeliever, you may find out what love is by the time you are ten or eleven years older. By that time you may have a little sense.

You make me laugh till I'm sick. I can just imagine what you look like, and how you try to look so innocent when you ask what love is. You're one of those tall, handsome, blue-eyed, black-haired young men who try to make people believe you are so shy and bashful.

I'll bet if some girl coaxed you to ask her for a date to go to a petting party you would probably fall over and ask her what petting meant? Yes, that's exactly what you would do, but if you would take this same girl out somewhere to park, you could absolutely show her what petting really meant. You also might find a pint somewhere in the car and offer her a drink.

How you do pretend! I would like to see you when you really fall in love. I'll bet you'll fall so hard you will be truly senseless for at least six months. But probably you are in love right now.

How about it, Mrs. Brown? I'm sorry

I've written such a long letter, but when I once get started about such people as Unbeliever I can hardly stop.

SHORTY.

I think you're quite right, Shorty. One cannot know what love is unless it happens along and changes everything. Love, like a cold shower, is never negative, it seldom leaves us where it finds us.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am of a very jealous nature and my boy friend isn't. He says he has enough confidence in me to trust me anywhere and knows I'm capable of taking care of myself. If I would rather be with some other boy, he says that's all right with him.

But I'm different. I know all the girls he used to go with and every time I hear him mention a girl's name or how pretty she is, I just see red, though I manage to keep quiet.

I know he never has cheated on me, but he is so good-looking I'm afraid I'll lose him because I'm not pretty and do not have nice clothes. People say I'm sweet and I'm cute, but that isn't enough.

Lots of times I find myself wishing I were his first love. I know he has had many love affairs and I'm afraid it's just another affair to him. If he really loved me he would be jealous.

Do you think love and jealousy go together or am I all wet? MITCHIE.

I don't think you're all wet, Mitchie, but partly so. Love and jealousy do not go together. To love is to trust. Seeing red, as you say, whenever he mentions some girl he knows, even though you manage to keep quiet most of the time, won't help you keep his love. What you should do, if you happen to know the girl he mentions, is to admire her with him. Put in a good word for those he knows and likes, earn his admiration, and show him that you can be gracious and generous toward others.

He probably does love you, that's why he trusts you. And even if he were very jealous of you, it wouldn't prove that he felt that way because

he loved you greatly. Because he encourages your friendship with other boys, is a sensible gesture on his part. As long as you two are not really engaged, and are just fond of each other, you are both free to have other friends and go out with them. Why don't you go out with other boys, too? If a boy is not so sure of a girl, if she can keep him interested and guessing a bit, her hold is stronger. Jealousy is a destructive force, it can blast love irretrievably and more quickly than any other factor and it invariably defeats its own ends.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have a little girl three years old. She has been with my mother for more than a year. I worked before and I used to keep her myself, until I met the man who is now my husband. My little girl was born out of wedlock, but my mother always helped me.

Now that I am married and have a boy nine months old, my husband tells me I cannot have her with us. I talked and talked to him, but he won't listen.

My mother insists that she won't keep my little girl any longer, and she has no other home. It would be so nice if we could raise both children together. My mother advised me to let him have the boy and I should come home and be with my girl, but I love my little boy, too. What shall I do? Should I leave him, or insist that he let me have my little girl with me?

WORRIED MOTHER.

You certainly should insist that you have your little girl with you. She needs your love and care and home environment; you are responsible for her and should look after her. You evidently made the mistake of not settling this point before you married him.

Your home is your own, too, isn't it? Surely you have some rights, too, and he knew about the child before you married. It is unkind on his part to take this silly stand, especially now. Take the child into your home, and give her the care she has a right to.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: My husband is twenty-three and I am twenty-one. We have been married four years, and have two adorable children. The oldest one not yet two.

We have spent and are spending the best part of our lives together; have seen disappointments and hardships that have bound our love tighter than when we were single. Like Flapper Wife, we go out together, his one night off in the week. He works nights.

What I really am writing in for is to say that love does not go in for ages. On some, it plays tricks, that's true. Some fellows and girls know their hearts when they are sixteen, some do not until they are twenty-eight, and some never. Or so it seems.

I have seen many marriages go on the rocks where the husband and wife were older.

And as for Pepper being engaged and not in love, it doesn't show much credit for her backbone. Without love marriage has nothing to hold it up. She will no doubt fall in love sooner or later, perhaps after she is married. It has been done.

There is no fool like an old fool in love, and many of these hard-hearted, antisentimental little fools, turn out to be the big soft old fools.

I HAPPEN TO KNOW.

There are exceptions in everything, my dear, and if your marriage is an exceptional one, I can only wish you happiness and its endurance.

Many letters come to me moaning and regretting youthful marriage. Others are happy and contented like your own. It all depends on the two involved. But as a general rule, it is best to marry when a girl is older, and has a better balanced perspective on life and love and other responsibilities.

Can a girl, or a boy know what love is at sixteen or seventeen? We'd like to discuss this further, children. Let's hear your opinion.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Many times I have felt that I would like to write to you after reading letters from women who write as Mother Heart has.

I was in the same position she is in

when, after having been married thirteen years, we adopted a black-eyed baby boy three weeks old, despite the fact that my husband was a disabled ex-service man.

And have we enjoyed him? He is now past five years old and the joy of our lives.

There is lots of worry and work with children, as every mother knows, but to one who loves children the joy of their love repays the work and worry.

I came from a large family. My mother had fourteen children, but raised only ten of us.

We never think of our boy being adopted now, nor do our friends, and my mother and my husband's parents have always treated him the same as the other grandchildren.

There are so many tiny tots who need a home that I would advise any couple desiring a child to get in touch with their State homes.

Just now our boy is in bed with the measles, and the other evening he put his arm around my neck and said I was the "bestest ever."

I wonder if some of the women ever stop to read over their letters after they write them, surely some of them don't, or they would never send them.

I have no sympathy with the girls who write that they are in love with a married man.

I have been married nearly nineteen years, had to give my husband up to serve his country, and he came back broken in health, and hasn't been well a day since he had the flu in 1918.

He gets very discouraged, as he knows there is no hope for him, but we try to see the bright side of life.

When you women fuss about your petty grievances, be thankful for your good health because when you lose that the world does look dark.

We are very happy over our precious little son and he makes life much brighter.

I only hope you women who love children and long for one will do as we did.

A SATISFIED WIFE AND MOTHER.

Yes, my dear, a little child can be a care, but his love will brighten a home and lonely hearts as nothing else can. You are courageous to look at life as you do, for courage, like cowardice, is undoubtedly contagious, but some people just can't catch it.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Won't you please help me? I am a girl of nineteen, and even though I must say it myself, I am good-looking.

I have gone with boys younger and older than myself, and still I cannot feel for any one as I feel for Jim, but he is married and has a daughter nine years old.

Although he is good to his wife she does not appreciate it. He has asked me to go away with him several times, but I am afraid; no one knows about us and it would break my mother's heart. Oh, Mrs. Brown, please help me, tell me what to do. I cannot go away, I love my mother, and I do not want to break her heart.

My parents are very strict with me, and if they knew of my going around with Jim they would not keep me in the house. I know it sounds funny to say my people are strict and yet I go out with Jim. The only time I go out with him is after work. I have a good position in a bank, and am making a fair salary. It helps mother a lot, and father and I are the only ones working. Mother is still young and has nine children of her own to take care of and three children of her brother's.

People who live near us praise me a lot. They say I am a good girl because they never see me go out alone at night. But I am afraid they will soon find out about me and Jim. Please, Mrs. Brown, help me.

LONELY ROSE.

If you want to do yourself a favor, Rose, drop Jim as quickly as you can and forget all about him. What sort of a man is he, a father and husband, and yet he asks you to go away with him? Now, wouldn't you be just a little goose to do that? Surely you don't really believe he loves you? Of course he doesn't. That "misunderstood-husband" pose is a very old one, though no doubt it is ever new to the very young.

Drop him, dear, and center your interest on some single boy nearer your own age. Get out among young folks, and leave him to seek his family's company. Just think, you will cause yourself a lot of grief if you are found out, and your mother will no doubt be distracted.

Married men who entice young girls to go out with them are with-

out honor and shame, and ought to be taught a lesson.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am writing to you for advice, as so many do. I suppose my story is almost identically the same as many others.

About nine months ago I went out West to work. I soon met a fellow to whom I was attracted. I am twenty years old, and I have fancied myself in love many times. I supposed this would be the same as the others, but it isn't.

I began going steady with him right after we met, till the time I went back East on my vacation. While I was home, he dated first one girl and then another, and didn't write one letter to me. When I came back, I told him I never wanted to see him again. I tried so hard to forget him.

One night he asked me to go out with him, and, Mrs. Brown, I couldn't refuse. I wanted to go so badly. Since then I have been out with him four or five times. Each time I vow I'll never go again. He goes out with other girls all the time, too.

As for myself, I have gone out with other fellows, but I don't enjoy myself. I keep thinking of the good times I've had with Eddie. I want to forget him, because he surely doesn't care anything about me, or he wouldn't act the way he does. The hard task in forgetting is that I see him every day.

This is a small place, and you can't help meeting people. Last night I saw him at the theater with another girl, and it seemed as though I couldn't bear it.

What would you advise me to do? Should I leave here? I can't stand to see him take other girls out, and then again I can't bear the thought of not seeing him.

He is thirty-five years old, fifteen years older than I. He has said lots of times that he wished I were older. He said we could never be happy together because of the difference in our ages. I don't think he'll ever marry again, as he has tried it once.

I have a good chance to go to another town to work. Should I accept? Do you think I can forget him? I will appreciate any advice you care to give me.

A GIRL IN LOVE.

Of course, dear, distance would enable you to forget him more readily. Why not take this chance of working in another town, and using your will power, too? I rather agree with

him, there is too much difference between your ages. You should marry a much younger man.

I doubt if he is in love with you, really in love, I mean. He probably likes you as a friend, likes to be with you and take you out now and then. You mustn't take him seriously. You are probably infatuated, and if you definitely make up your mind to forget him, and go to another town, you'll find that forgetting is not such a very difficult job and it can be done.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: This is our wedding anniversary. One year ago I was married to my second husband, and I can say he has brought me the only real happiness I have ever known, except my children.

Have just finished reading the letter from On the Fence, and I can say at one time I felt exactly the same.

I was married when I was fifteen, the first time. We had two children. The boy is now ten and the girl seven.

My husband was very mean to us; left us for another woman; secured a divorce and married her.

Two years after that I met a man who appealed to me very much. We became engaged, but he could never get ready to marry. The waiting almost killed me. I was so anxious for a home for myself and my children. About a year later he told me there was a woman he loved better than me. I thought life had never been so cruel.

I was just going on, not knowing what to do, when my sister introduced me to a fine man who is now my husband. Instantly he fell in love with me. I knew he loved me, but I could not figure out my feelings toward him.

He tried to persuade me every way he could to marry him. He was so good to me. In fact, better than I had ever had a man act toward me. We did not spend much money on picture shows, et cetera, but we would take nice long drives in the fresh air, which I needed very much.

Like On the Fence, I had a bad spell of sickness, and he was kindness and consideration itself. That opened my eyes, for a man will show you just how much he thinks of you when you are sick.

As soon as I was able, we were married, and he has been the best husband ever.

He has given me all the little things I

have wished for all my life, and we have had the most delightful times together. He has made me forget all about my past disappointments and griefs, and he adores my children.

Mrs. Brown, don't you think I have a lot to be thankful for?

And, dear On the Fence, this is from a woman who thought she could never love again.

A HAPPY TEXAS WIFE.

Yes, indeed, you have much to be thankful for, my dear, that you have found real happiness at last. I think marriage at fifteen is a mistake, and you might have saved yourself much unhappiness if you had waited until you were older. But it is usually previous hardship that teaches us to appreciate our present possessions. Happy days!

DEAR MRS. BROWN: You have probably never received a letter just like this one before; but there's something that puzzles me, and I can't and won't ask any of the women I know just what they have against me.

I am thirty-five, have never been intoxicated for a moment, have never been in any kind of trouble, have a fair education, and am in good health. I also have a little money saved.

The general idea which I wish to express is that women, for some reason, simply don't like me at all. Half of them apparently feel above me, and the other half are afraid to try to be friends with me. I count myself as a person of good character and keep good company. But women apparently don't care anything about my money or my good record. I am on the verge of hating them all.

What can you suggest? What's the matter with me?

LONESOME BILL.

It is not easy to diagnose your case without being personally acquainted with you, Bill, but there are some things which I shall gladly suggest for you to consider.

First of all, however, don't attempt to hate women. Perhaps you've been in contact with those who do not understand you at all, and that is why you were not able to make friends with them. How

about your personal appearance? Do you dress as well as you can and try to be very neat? Don't show how eager you are to make friends, but always try to be friendly and sociable. Join a men's club; perhaps some of the boys will introduce you to nice girls who might appreciate your good points. But don't give up. Change your circle of friends; that may help; and try not to be critical and pick on little things.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have read many pages of the problems set before you, and would like you to help my girl friend.

Mary has been in love with Vance for a long time. She is certain of her love. During the past two years he has shown no real interest in her until of late, and not much at that. Other friends have warned Mary against Vance, because he chases every girl he can date. He tries to have as much fun as he can, and often cracks stories and jokes that can't be considered nice.

All this, however, has failed to turn Mary against him. She still cares about him even more than she did before. Vance does not drink or smoke, is good-looking, and has some good qualities; but what he tries with girls is utterly impossible. He's just girl-crazy. Yet Mary says she loves him.

There were times when she tried to get him out of her mind, but she just can't do so. She even tries to win his love. No tale, true or false, turns her against him. What can one do with a girl like that?

I have written to you before, and you advised me about my reputation, and I have been doing as you told me to. Since you wrote me, I've even been complimented about my behavior. So I have full faith in your advice.

GYPSY.

I'm happy to hear you've taken my advice and are getting along so well. Choosing the right path, my child, has never hurt any one.

As for Mary, you might try to get her interested in some other boy. But if she will not try to get Vance out of her mind, and use her will power to make herself forget him, no one else can do this for her. From what you say, it is too bad that he is such a worthless boy. I don't think

Mary's really in love; often the "bad-boy" type of young man can fascinate a girl like Mary to the point where the girl can't realize how foolishly she is wasting her time, especially since he doesn't take any great notice of her.

Why not have a talk with one of the other boys who likes Mary, and plan between you to help her forget Vance.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I wonder if you have room for one more perplexed, undecided wife? You don't know how much your answer means to me. It may change the whole tide of my unhappy life, and I do so want peace and happiness! But let me put my problem before you first of all.

I am a young married woman of seventeen, have been married two and one half years; and I have a baby girl one year old. My husband is a good, steady worker and adores his baby. But I am dissatisfied with him; we have been quarreling so much of late.

I love my baby above all else, but my supposed "love" for my husband has not lasted. I miss him when we are separated, just as I miss my own rooms, my own furniture and housework. Is that love? Could it not honestly be called a habit formed by two and a half years of everyday association with each other?

I feel that I shall die if I have to stay here with him. He is so different from my kind of folks. He has no culture or refinement and will not even try to do better. The women who are my next-door neighbors are old, stodgy, self-satisfied married women who are content to sit back and let the world go by.

I am young. I want to be free, to go to dances again, to have boy friends and meet people of my own age, to see some new shows, go on a trip and see new places and new faces about me. I want adventure with a big A and romance with a bigger R, and no matrimony. I'm tired of cooking three meals a day, of washing and ironing twice a week; tired of mending and darning and washing dishes and listening to other women tell about the time their Mary or Jimmie had the measles!

I have a good home to go to, a father who would be overjoyed to have me back, who could and would give me clothes and a trip and, at least, a start toward those other things I want so badly.

And there's the baby. I really believe my own father would make her a better parent than her own father. He would give her a better chance for a good education, and I believe I could make up to her for everything that she would lose by my getting a divorce. I would have no objections to her father seeing her as often as he wished. And yet it's easy enough to talk, or rather write, about it; but when it comes to packing up and moving out, that's where I lose nerve. It's the final break that means everything, and when I think of it I say: "Oh, I can't! I can't!"

So there you have my problem in a nutshell, Mrs. Brown. Won't you tell me what to do? Give me your honest opinion of what I am to do, and I shall abide by it. I feel that I *can't* go on with this farce, feeling as I do. Won't you heed my S O S?

MARGARET.

Dear Margaret, instead of feeling that in some ways life with you is a farce, why not face the reality with a big R. I can understand your desire and longing for good times, friends, music and laughter, and the wish to escape from the monotonous drudgery of housework and cooking. You are so young, my dear, and youth will not be denied its fun. You wouldn't want to be a quitter, though, would you? Would you wish to admit to the world in general that your marriage is not a success and that you've quit? I doubt it.

But, instead of going about every day with dissatisfaction gnawing at your heartstrings, why not try to be practical about things. What you need is a little regular diversion and a new perspective on things in general.

Don't be too hard on your husband. Continue being patient and tolerant; you won't be the loser. Don't find fault and nag or try to make him feel ambitious against his will. Have friends in regularly once or twice a week; young married couples whose views on life are much like your own. Get the radio going, dance a bit, play cards.

Once every week, either in the

afternoon or evening, go out with a woman friend, if your husband won't take you out. Take in a show, have dinner out if you can arrange to have some one take care of the kiddy. Get a marcel, buy a new dress or a hat or a pair of new shoes now and then. And in a short time you'll feel more cheerful and more satisfied. Try to be friendly with your husband. And if you have friends calling he may even learn to enjoy social contact and become more ambitious about himself. Anything is possible, but one must try. A true heart often beats beneath an unpolished exterior.

So head up, dear; read in your spare time, give the wash to a laundry. The rough-dry or damp-wash service is not expensive. Set aside a little time just for your very own use. Others find time, and so can you.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: You and many who might read this may think I don't know what I'm talking about, but I do. I'm telling you that no man with common sense would get married. Marriage just enables a woman to have a good time, a man to support her, and getting something for nothing.

I was one of those tough men who never expected to fall for a baby face. But I did. And I fell hard, too. I knew I was a fool; but, like all the rest of the saps, I married the girl.

For a while everything went fine, but in the end she did just what I expected any woman to do. She wasn't satisfied, even though I treated her fair, gave her a nice home, looked toward the future I had in view, and she had plenty of money. But she left me.

Of course, we had a quarrel now and then; every married couple has. I tried to trust her as much as I possibly could, but her action shot to pieces all the faith I ever had in women. Marriage is a mistake, all right. I don't believe women give a man a square chance.

HARD-BOILED STEVE.

Now, weren't you the generous, big-hearted man to give a little girl

a chance to prove that women just couldn't play fair! My, my! Nothing but your own prejudice and suspicious nature drove your wife away from you; did you know that? Think it over.

You brought this on yourself—I mean the failure of your marriage. You distrusted your wife; you *expected* her to walk out on you some time or other, just to prove that your idea about women was right. You probably made yourself unbearable, and then what could the poor girl do? She chose the nearest exit.

Take stock of yourself, Steve. Try to realize that marriage and true happiness cannot be built upon suspicion and distrust. And as for your assertion that women do not give a man a square chance, we'll just let some of them write to you and tell you what they think about your idea.

How about it, girls?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have just finished reading "The Friend in Need." I'm not coming to you with my troubles, but with my blessings.

I am married to a young lawyer who is just establishing his office. I'm a stenographer for another law firm. We are living with his mother, as she is in ill health and he is the only child. But all mothers-in-law are not bad. She is wonderful to me. We have never had a cross word. If my husband and I get peeved at each other, she never says a word; always sweet and kind. My husband and I have had little spats, but they always end up by talking it over. Generally, in the middle of it, we begin to realize what we are doing, and one of us calls a halt, and then we kiss and make up. I'll admit it was hard to try to get used to living with two people instead of one and changing homes, but I just bite my tongue and leave the room if I feel my temper getting the best of me.

We have our evenings planned, so we go out three evenings a week, not including the ones we spend with my mother, as she lives in the same town we do. The other four evenings we spend at home. We have a garden, and after working all day

we are both ready to go to bed early. We are not jealous of each other. If I meet a boy friend and go to the drug store for a soda with him, it is O. K. with Jack, and if he goes with a girl friend, it is O. K. with me.

We go on picnics together, and we have wonderful times. We both try not to get peeved at the same time, and it works ninety per cent of the time.

Mrs. Brown, I wish more young people would be frank with each other before marriage; then there would be no false conceptions. We discussed everything pro and con before marrying, and we went into it with our eyes open.

We go out with unmarried couples once in a while. It seems to bring back the things we used to do, and we enjoy it. Jack is always kind to me. We never fuss before our guests or even his mother. We have too much respect for ourselves. Please, Mrs. Brown, I hope I haven't made you tired, but I'm so happy and so is Jack.

JEENE.

Now, doesn't it make you feel good all over to read a nice letter like that? Hang on to your sane view of life, Jeene, and if your hubby can do the same, you two need never fear that your marriage will not be a success.

If you both trust each other to play fair and never do anything underhanded in the slightest way, you can be happy to the end of your days. Love and marriage are glorious, beautiful factors in our lives, if we don't let petty jealousies and mean little irritations seep into our bones, and, instead, try to be generous and tolerant and big about things. Good luck to you both, dear.

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN: I'm a girl eighteen years of age. My problem is just another love affair, and I want you to help me.

I'm fairly good-looking, and I am the only child and have been given everything that money could buy, but in this case I can't have what I want.

First of all, I've been in love with this fellow for about a year; but I could never go out with him unless I lied to my folks about it. I've done it quite a few times and have been caught. My folks hate this

fellow for the reason that he is not in my class. We broke up about two months ago, and since then I just can't go out with any one else. I could have plenty of dates if I want them, but I just don't seem to be able to forget him. His family, when they found out that we broke up, were snooty to me, and they went around telling people that I was a gold digger and that I was out for all I could get. They even went so far as to try to get me fired from where I'm working.

Now, whether the one I love is at the bottom of this I don't know, but I've made it my business to never be where I think he is. Of course, when I see him I get all excited; but, on the other hand, my folks told me that if I ever married him or had him for a boy friend they would disown me. I know that they mean every word of it. After all his family has said about me, I'm still crazy about him, and I don't know whether I should go back to him or not. I'm having the time of my life trying to forget him, because there is always something that gets in my way that reminds me of him or of the good times we had together. I don't see him very often, because I don't try to. I want to try to forget him. The main reason why I like him is because he treats a girl just like a decent girl would want to be treated. I know that he likes me, for he has phoned; but he has been told that I'm not at home. We've talked about getting married, but I always had my folks to think about. I think, if I got married, that I'd want to settle down and not have to work; but I know that if I married him I would have to work.

Now, what I want to know is this: Should I try to forget him or should I go back to him in the face of losing my folks? I know that I won't be able to like any one for a long time as much as I like him.

Please tell me what to do. I don't want to do the wrong thing.

UNDECIDED AT EIGHTEEN.

Of course you should try to forget him, child, and you can do it, too; but I can't guarantee that you can do so at once. Love is like the rose; so very sweet that one always tries to gather it in spite of the thorns. But in your case I doubt very much that what you feel is love.

I would advise you to go out with other boys and just make up your mind that you are going to forget

him and have a good time with others. I'm sure you can if you try hard enough and give yourself a little time.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I, too, am asking you, like Alice Blue Gown, to help me out of my nightmare.

I believe I am the most unhappy girl in the world. That is saying a lot, I know.

When I was fifteen I had my first real beau. I went steady with him over a year, and through a quarrel we broke. About eight months after that I met D. We had great times together—picnics, shows, parties, and loads of fun.

I went with D. over a year. He was the opposite of my first beau, both in looks and personality. Though we were both young, I really cared a lot for D., and I know he loved me. Even now, after three years, he has very little to do with other girls.

We finally broke up, and I ran around every night with a new fellow. I thought I was having the time of my life. Then I met L.

He was as nice as he could be the first four months I went with him. He was very much in love with me and, oh, so jealous.

We seemed to like the same things, and I thought I had met my fate. Then he got mean. I was always a popular girl, full of life, and always laughing. I put up with his ugly temper for five months and then broke up with him.

We did not make up for three months, and he followed me everywhere I went. He would run off with me at a dance and beg me to marry him.

He even threatened my life. I was afraid of him. He was the kind that would do anything. My mother and dad never did like him very well. They knew how mean he was to me.

My pep was going and my nerves were a wreck. Finally he acted better, and one night, after having had a quarrel with mom and dad, I ran off and married L. What a foolish girl I was! I'll always regret it. L. loved me, no matter how mean he was; but that jealous temper!

We lived alone for two months until his mother came and I couldn't stand it. She never liked me, and my husband got worse. He liked his drinks too well. He was wonderful at times, but so mean at other times that it couldn't make up for the good part. I wasn't very strong, and my nerves were giving way all the time. L. lost his job, and we went to my home.

It was just plain Hades then. In front of mom and dad he was lovely. It was all "honey" and "dear," and when we were alone it was the opposite. I was ill in bed three times, and the last time I had a nervous breakdown on account of him.

My pep was all gone. I lost a lot of friends through him, and my smiles were all forced. I tried my best not to let mom and dad know, as they were wonderful. It was dad and mom who were up with me nights when I almost died.

L. would go away in the morning and come back at night and never tell me where he went. He said it was no one's business how much money he made.

Oh, I can't tell the half of it, Mrs. Brown. He has hit me and just ruined my life.

He lied and lied to me, and when I was ill in bed I made him, go. That was in January. He didn't want to go, but I made him get out.

I got well after that and gained a few pounds. I went to dances and saw him there. He bothered me until a friend of mine punched his nose for trying to knock me down at the dance. Now he leaves me alone. I see him a lot, but never look at him. I've got some pep back, but I'm not the same. My acting is only put on. I have loads of friends, and the boys are just as plentiful as ever; but I'm so bored.

Here I am at twenty, disgusted with life. I don't care if I live or not.

I go to all kinds of parties and places. I don't care what becomes of me. If only I had some one to love me and care what I do!

Alice Blue Gown, if he loves you, even though he hasn't said so, be happy and thankful. Show him you enjoy those little, inexpensive things. I know. I was denied so much. I sat home week days and Sundays to prove I can stick, but L. never appreciated it. I'm sure your man is different.

Mrs. Brown, why do boys expect payment for an evening's pleasure. Are all you boys like that?

So many I've gone with expect you to give in to prove you like them or to pay them for a show or dance. Isn't there any boy who likes good, clean fun? I'm modern. I drink some and smoke and all that; but I'm old-fashioned in my ideas of love, I guess. I get so tired of these boys I feel like never going out again. I like to go on a picnic, swim, dance; but after either one it's always, "Will you?"

Maybe I'll find a real man some day, but I don't care much now.

No, Check and Double Check, a boy

does not think more of you because you give in.

Not a decent, honorable man. I know; please take my advice. I've lost boy friends because I wouldn't, but I never lost much.

Here I am giving advice to others when I'm broken-hearted and going fast myself, but I like to see others happy.

BLUE DOLLY.

That's just it, Dolly; if once you can interest yourself a little in other people, your own troubles will seem smaller. The thing for you to do is to try to keep your mind occupied by other things. I know it's hard, but give yourself a chance.

What you really need is a home of your own and a husband who will be sweet to you and appreciate you. Since your husband is everything else but what a husband should be, perhaps, if you had your freedom, you would be of a different mind and feel easier about the whole thing.

Talk it over with your folks, dear, and see what they think is best for you to do. And cheer up; things are bound to change, and there is a great deal of truth in the proverbial dark cloud and silver lining.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Being a steady reader of your department, I thought I would also ask your advice.

I was sixteen when I met my husband. I had been foolish and gone out with all sorts of fellows, until I took the wrong path. I married him three months before my baby girl was born. He was very mean to me, so I left him. We are divorced now. We were of different religions, so, you see, we weren't even an equal pair.

Probably this thing wouldn't have happened to me if my mother hadn't died

when I was quite young. I didn't have any one to teach me things.

I met a nice fellow three months ago; he is twenty-one years of age and I am now eighteen. He tells me he loves me, and I love him, but I don't believe him. He takes out other girls once in a while, but tells me about it after he's been out. His people are very much against me. They scold him and threaten him, but he doesn't listen to them and continues to see me. He thinks a great deal of his parents, but is undecided as to what he should do.

He has been telling me he wanted to enlist in the army for three years, so his people will forget about all this and he can marry me when he returns; but I think, once he leaves, he'll never really come back and marry me, although he says he never will forget me and will always love me.

What do you think, Mrs. Brown? Do you think he really loves me, or is it just infatuation? Do you think he ought to join the army? I tell him not to. Or do you think I should make other friends and wait longer before I marry again?

BROKEN-HEARTED JEAN.

This whole affair seems rather uncertain, Jean, so I am of the opinion that neither one of you is really in love. You may think so, but I doubt it.

Whether or not he should join the army is something that he must decide for himself; he's the one who'll be tied up most. And I really think that, since you've had one unhappy marriage, you ought not to rush into another unless you are perfectly sure you have found the right man.

"Never" and "always" are two great words. Don't depend on them entirely. Look further, dear, before you marry again, and don't rush into anything unless you have first considered the matter from all angles.

Mrs. Brown will be glad to solve in these pages problems on which you desire advice. Your letters will be regarded confidentially and signatures will be withheld.

Although Mrs. Brown receives more letters than she can possibly print in the department, she answers all the others by mail. So, lay your problem before her with the knowledge that it will have her full attention.

Address Mrs. Laura Alston Brown, Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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I am President of an old-established, million-dollar manufacturing Company. We distribute high-quality Groceries and other Household Necessities direct from factory to user through Authorized Local Representatives. We have thousands of customers in every state. Last year our Representatives made nearly two million dollars!

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This is NOT a contest. I offer a brand-new car free to producers as an extra reward or bonus—in addition to their large cash profits. If you already have a car I will give you cash instead. Mail coupon for full particulars.

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You positively don't need capital or experience. It makes no difference where you live. No course of training is required. All you do is call on your friends, neighbors, and my established customers in your territory and take care of their orders. I never sell through stores. You alone get the profit on all orders from these customers. Keep your present job and start with me in spare time if you want to. Oscar Stuart, of West Virginia, reports \$18 profit in 2½ hours' spare time. Mrs. K. R. Root, of S. Carolina, with household duties and children to care for, earned \$50 the first week in her spare time. This shows the tremendous possibilities.

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Here's an amazing opportunity to win a big cash prize for just a moment's time. Simply send us a name for this beautiful society girl—a name that you think would sound nice in a Magazine advertisement. We have chosen this society girl to sponsor a new line of Beauty Preparations. Her picture will appear in our advertisements. But because of her social position she cannot use her real name. We are going to pay a big cash prize just for a winning name. Think of a name—send it to us TODAY—Win \$250.00 cash and qualify for an opportunity to win further prizes of \$3,600.00 or Buick 8 Cylinder Sedan and \$1,100.00 cash for promptness in the simple way we show you. See rules below.

YOU CAN'T LOSE

Nothing to lose—costs nothing to win. It is easy to think of a name. Some name that may flash into your mind this very instant may win the prize. Just some simple name like Helen Miller or Mary Lee may be chosen as the prize winner. Don't let this opportunity slip through your fingers. Think of a name NOW—send it TODAY.

JUST SENDING A NAME QUALIFIES YOU FOR OPPORTUNITY TO

Win \$2,600.00 or Buick 8 Sedan
and \$1,100.00 for Promptness

NAMING CONTEST RULES

This huge prize is Extra and in addition to the cash prize for the Society Girl's name. No wonder we say that here is your opportunity to win a fortune. Think of it! \$2,600.00 all cash or a big Buick 8 cylinder Sedan and \$1,100.00 in cash besides—all coming to you at once! Many work a lifetime without ever getting together such a magnificent sum. Hundreds of prizes—over \$4,300.00 in cash will be given in this huge prize distribution. Some yet unknown person is going to win a fortune—why not you? You have just as good a chance as anyone. Every single person who takes an active part will be rewarded in cash. Just send a name suggestion to qualify for this opportunity of a lifetime—nothing more to do to qualify. But act at once—remember \$1,100.00 Extra is given for promptness.

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